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CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE SECOND GENERATION: EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSES WITHIN THE SLOVENE NATIONAL BENEFIT SOCIETY IN THE 1920 S

SUMMARY

From its foundation in 1904, the Slovene National Benefit Society (*Slovenska Narodna podporna jednota* — SNPJ) developed in its members liberalistic attitudes and socialist views of the world. Organization activities had great success among American Slovenes. As a fraternal organization the SNPJ promoted the development of the socialist movement, which is another of its merits. Through its paper *Prosveta*, which was partly published in English, it even attracted to its ranks-generation American Slovenes.

The paper examines SNPJ activities in the 1920s. Printed materials such as *Prosveta* and *Mladinski list*-Juvenile were used by the author as her primary sources of information.

Class consciousness, intertwined with ethnic identity, determined the participation of Slovene immigrants in the labor movement in the United States. At the same time, it influenced to a large extent their other public activities and their everyday life as a whole. Thus, it represented one of the main questions that challenged the second generation, as they strived to conform to the American society, while remaining linked to the ethnic community.¹ In the paper a definition of the extent and the modes in which the children of Slovene immigrants expressed class consciousness will be attempted. To this purpose, the evidence of such attitudes within the activity of the fraternal organization Slovene National Benefit Society (*Slovenska Narodna Podporna Jednota*, in short SNPJ) will be examined.

For time considerations the research has been limited to the 1920s. Thus, the further development of these attitudes up to the time of the Second World War will just be suggested. It is natural to suppose that also in this regard the impact of the Depression and the New Deal with increased labor unrest and a different political environment upon the Slovene ethnic community opened a new phase, which will be worth examining at a later stage. On the other hand, as in the 1920s some innovations were introduced within the SNPJ's activities in order to meet the needs of the American-born youth, they may be considered factors that contributed to shape the position of the second generation in the organization in the 1930s.

¹ With regard to the question of the second generation within the Slovene community in the United States, cf. for instance, the ethnological study by Nives Sulčić (19). The same subject is approached in my study (13) to which this paper is partly related.

The choice of the SNPJ as the subject of the research has been determined both by its prominent role in the Slovene ethnic community and by the principles on which its activity was founded. At its establishment in Chicago in 1904, the SNPJ adhered to free-thinking ideas and to the socialist view of class struggle. In such a way it aimed at meeting the needs of the immigrants who supported such attitudes and opposed the fraternal activities led by the catholic leaders. Indeed, the first Slovene fraternal organization which assumed a national character by spreading its activity in various Slovene ethnic communities throughout the United States was the Grand Carniolian Slovenian Catholic Union of USA (since 1965 American Slovenian Catholic Union, *Kranjska Slovenska Katoliška Jednota*, in short KSKJ). It was established in Joliet, Ill. in 1894 (23:553—555; 7:237—239).

By 1917 the SNPJ's membership outnumbered that of any other Slovene fraternal association. After one decade, in 1928, it numbered 40,911 adult members and 19,331 in the juvenile section, while the correspondent figures concerning the KSKJ, which ranked second, were 21,333 and 11,712. In 1925 Jože Zavertnik, one of the SNPJ's leaders since its establishment, published a history of its development till then. In the book he pointed out that its growth was largely due to the increased proportion of immigrants who intended to settle in the United States and to the fact that they were more ready to follow socialist ideas than the first arrivals (15:20—23; 23:581—582). This, attitude may be attributed to a large extent to changing economic and social conditions in the gradually industrializing homeland, as well, as to immigrants' position in the American society. Besides the SNPJ's achievement of a prominent role among the Slovene fraternal organizations, the conspicuous development of the Slovene socialist movement in the United States proves the widespread secular mentality and class consciousness within the Slovene ethnic community. Its outstanding position in this regard among Slavic ethnic communities in the United States has already been stressed also in some studies on Slavic or South Slavic immigrants in general (3:10—11; 18:84—85; 5:23).

Like several other ethnic fraternal societies, the SNPJ did not limit its activity to promoting mutual aid. It became a central social, cultural and political institution among Slovene Americans. In these various fields it collaborated with the socialist movement to a large extent. Indeed, many immigrants adhered to both organizations. On the other hand, the SNPJ was in harsh conflict with the catholic institutions. As the question concerning the future of the Slovenes in the homeland became prominent during the First World War, the political commitment in this regard strengthened in the SNPJ, as well as in other Slovene ethnic organizations. At the same time, their conflict intensified. The Slovenian Republican Alliance (*Slóvensko Republičansko Združenje*, since 1919 Yugoslav Republican Alliance-*Jugoslovan-sko Republičansko Združenje*), led by socialist and progressive immigrants and supported also by the SNPJ, advocated the establishment of the Yugoslav federal republic. The catholic leaders, instead, adhered to the movement, promoted among the South Slavic immigrants by political emigrés from Austria-Hungary and by the Serbian government, which aimed at the unification of the South Slavs in a monarchy under the rule of the Serbian dynasty.²

² The PJ's role in the first twenty years of its activity, as well as specifically within the movement concerning the national question during the First World war was described by J. Zavertnik (23:553—623). Such movements, which developed within the Slovene ethnic community in the United States during both world wars, have been the main subject of the

The polemics concerning the national question continued after the war finished (e.g.—62:9; 41:2; 78:2).³ At the same time, structural changes in the ethnic community compelled Slovene organizations to face new, common problems. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924, which reflected growing nativistic attitudes in American society, sharply reduced the inflow of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. This legislation affected also the Slovene ethnic community in the United States, so that it could not rely on further immigration in order to maintain its ethnic identity. Indeed, the increase of foreign-born membership in the Slovene fraternal organizations reached its peak in the years from 1920 to 1926. As the SNPJ's leaders observed this situation within its ranks, they realized that its future depended upon the interest of the second generation in keeping it alive. Thus it was necessary to foster their involvement in its activities (20:44).

To this purpose the American-born youth needed ethnic education. Fraternal principles and a progressive mentality were to be encouraged among them as well, as the SNPJ's activity was founded upon them. Moreover, it was necessary to keep the second generation class conscious and faithful to the socialist view of class struggle.

The SNPJ's leaders undertook their first step in this direction when in 1922 they began to publish *Mladinski list-Juvenile*, which would adopt the title *The Voice of Youth* in 1945. Indeed, already at the SNPJ's sixth convention, which was held in Springfield, Ill. in September 1918, it was decided that a monthly which would address the children that were enrolled in the organization would be established after 1,000 subscriptions were collected. It was supposed to become the organ of the SNPJ's juvenile section, which had been founded in 1913 and provided financial benefit for children from 1 to 16 years old (23:596,612). By the time of the SNPJ's next convention, which was held in Cleveland, Oh. in September 1921, the monthly had not yet been established. However, on this occasion the need of it was stressed again, and at a meeting of the Supreme Board at the end of January 1922 it was decided that its first issue would be published on July 1st of the same year (145:132:13).

From the beginning *Mladinski list-Juvenile* was published both in Slovene and in English. Thus the SNPJ showed the intent to preserve the ethnic language among the second generation as long as possible and at the same time the awareness that it was inevitable for the youth to adopt the English. (39:4) The monthly dealt with various subjects which could interest the young readers. It contained several examples of the best Slovene literature and articles on their authors, as well as on Slovene culture in general, besides many articles, stories and poems aimed at promoting class consciousness.⁴ The authors stressed the need of class struggle, as well as the role of the socialist movement in leading it. At the same time, the SNPJ was represented

first studies in emigration history within Slovene historiography. It is worth remarking that the activities of the Slovene emigrants in the First World War are dealt with as part of a larger movement of South Slavic emigrants in the United States by the Croatian historian I. Cizmič (5). The Slovene movement in this period is examined separately by M. Kodrič (12:63—87). The activities of the Slovene ethnic community in the United States during the Second World War are the central subject in Matjaž Klemenčič's work (9), in which the structure and the life of the community as a whole and the earlier movement promoted at the time of the First World War are taken into account as well. The same historian has examined various aspects of the life and activities of Sloven Americans in several articles — e.g. 10: 11.

³ In 1908 the SNPJ established as its own organ *Glasilo Slovenske narodne podporne jednote*, and since 1916 it has been entitled *Prosveta*.

⁴ The content of *Mladinski list-Juvenile* is well described in: 32.

as an organization that adhered to socialism and defended labor rights. The youth was urged to join it, as a sixteen year old miner did in a story, written by the SNPJ's leader Jože Zaverčnik (135; 146; 113; 116; 115; 114; 112). The care for class consciousness was closely connected with the nourishment of the parents and their social position:

»For a worker it is very important to educate his children in a working-class spirit, so that they respect his class and understand how much the parents suffered before the children have grown up and have begun to earn their living by themselves« (39 : 4).

Thus, a particular emphasis on miners' working and living conditions in the literature published in the monthly may be related to the fact that a conspicuous proportion of Slovene immigrants was employed in mines. Besides, working conditions in general and also the specific exploitation of child labor were very hard in mines (38; 134; 125). In an article on the youth in some coal fields in Pennsylvania it was pointed out that the majority of them had to leave school before the completion of the eighth grade in order to be employed. Their dangerous work and low wages were stressed. At the same time, the early involvement of the young miner in the class struggle was praised.

»His father, uncles and older brothers — even he himself — have participated in many strikes during his short life time and he knows the stigma of 'scab'. He carries a union card and awaits the day when he too will be a full-fledged miner« (29 : 214—215).

Indeed, as will be shown in detail later on, a strong class consciousness among the youth in mining sites emerges from the letters sent to *Mladinski list-Juvenile* and from the articles published on the English page of *Prosveta*, the SNPJ's organ, in 1927 and 1928, when harsh strikes were taking place in mines.

However, it is worth observing the opinion of the same author that the high degree of class consciousness was due also to the scarce school education. Since the young miners were not »pumped with so much capitalist propaganda« as the youth in other industrial centers, they did not share their »great ambitions« (29 : 215). The distrust towards the American school which emerges from this statement must have been common to many Slovene immigrants, as the SNPJ's leaders felt the need to advocate public education through articles in *Prosveta* and in *Mladinski list-Juvenile*. They were aware that the education in the American school threatened the maintenance of the class consciousness cherished by the immigrants as apposed to American values, intertwined with their ethnic identity. They admitted that the children of Slovene immigrants became »American in mentality and in language« in the public school. However, they asserted:

»The youth will remain in America and they will benefit by being familiar with the environment in which they will have to act« (16 : 2).

A certain degree of the Americanization promoted by the public school was necessary in order to prepare children for a successful involvement in American society. Class consciousness would not be harmed, if it was nourished in ethnic organizations and first of all in the family.

»If the child gets a proper education at home, at school he is able to think according to his principles, those cherished by his father, by the working class« (114 : 204).

Thus, a larger participation by the children of Slovene immigrants in public education could only be useful to the improvement of the economic and social position of each individual and of the whole working class. It was important to send the youth to school in order to »save them from capitalist exploitation«, since »educated workers will realize soon that they have to organize in order to preserve rights that they have already gained and in order to obtain new ones« (134:4 — cf. 57; 124). Parents were warned not to send their children to work in factories and mines until they were sixteen years old, and a centralized system of compulsory public education for children under this age was supported (104; 26; 34). The second-generation youth were also encouraged to pursue higher education.

»Today higher education is almost impossible for the worker. However, he ought to educate his son or daughter as well as he can and to give him the opportunity to attend school as long as his means allow« (114 : 205).

Several articles, published by the second generation on the English page of *Prosveta*, show a favorable response to such attitudes. They joined the immigrant leaders in inviting their peers to give up their prejudices and »to change both [their] and [their] parents' attitude towards higher education« (130 : 6 — cf. 44; 84).

The minutes of various meetings of the SNPJ's Supreme Board show that the organization also offered some financial help for public education (e. g. — 8). However, the youth complained of lacking aid and demanded more support (44; 84). Indeed, the SNPJ's leaders often engaged in disputes concerning the need of funds for education. For instance, both at the SNPJ's 8th convention and at the 9th one, which were held respectively in Waukegan, Ill. in September 1925 and in Chicago, Ill. in May 1929 it was proposed to offer financial aid to students, who would attend the Brookwood Labor College in Katonah, N. Y., established in 1921 in order to educate future union leaders. However, after having discussed the proposal, the SNPJ's leaders rejected it. They justified this decision by questioning the labor ideology within the school (22 : 85; 23 : 61—64).

It is also apparent from this proposal that the youth themselves considered the furtherance of class consciousness and the ability to conduct class struggle among the main goals which could be achieved through education. On the English page of *Prosveta* another labor college, that in Mena, Ark. was represented as well. The importance of workers' education, »relating to the status of the workers in society, their history as a class, their special problems, claims and aims«, was stressed.⁵ Moreover, it was asserted that the pursuit of higher education in general provided the labor class with »a larger group from which to pick good, sound, intelligent and sincere leaders« (44 : 6).

On the other hand, by receiving higher education the youth would develop into wise and skillful leaders in the SNPJ and would elevate the

⁵ 125:6 — the College in Mena is represented by Kate Richards O'Hare (77:6). Kate Richards O'Hare was one of the socialist leaders in the United States in the first quarter of the 20th century. She helped organize the Commonwealth College in Mena, Ark. in the 1920s.

Slovene ethnic community to »an important role in the American limelight« (44 : 6 — cf. 84 : 6). Since the improvement of labor leadership and of the ethnic identity and also considered it somehow connected with the maintenance the same time, it can be deduced that the second generation still cherished ethnic identity and also considered it somehow connected with the maintenance of class consciousness.

Such an attitude also emerged when in Spring and Summer 1927 the question of the preservation of the ethnic language was discussed in *Prosveta* by some of the SNPJ's young members. Before examining this dispute, it is worth noting that it developed among the youth who were active in the lodges, defined American-speaking. The establishment of such lodges, as well as the promotion of meetings led in English for the children of the juvenile section were proposed at the SNPJ's 8th convention in 1925. Indeed, since the gradual loss of the ethnic language among the second generation was inevitable, it was realized that the youth would get involved in the organization only if they were allowed to express themselves in English. Besides, the SNPJ's leaders had to concede the introduction of new activities which would meet the aspirations of the second generation to conform to American society. At the same time, ethnic, class, progressive and fraternal education in English was to be offered both to the members of the juvenile section and to those youth who outgrew it. Apart from the activity in the lodges, the SNPJ's press could assume an essential role in this regard. Thus, the introduction of the English language in *Prosveta* and even a new organ entirely in English were proposed. (21 : 27—29, 66, 72, 85).

Although the SNPJ's leaders as a whole expressed the awareness that changes were necessary in the organization, the participation of Richard J. Zavertnik in the convention has a particular meaning, as he was the proposer of the American-speaking lodges and of the organ in English (21 : 85, 149). Already at that time a member of the Supervising Committee, he would become one of the most active leaders within the American-speaking subordinate lodge movement. On the other hand, several articles in *Prosveta* show his disposition to engage in long debates in which majority opinions opposed to his views would prevail.

Anyway, the first result of Zavertnik's claims at the SNPJ's 8th convention was the establishment of the first American-speaking lodge, Pioneer Lodge 559, in Chicago only a few months after the convention, on November 13, 1925 (52 : 24—25). By the end of the year this example was followed by the youth in Cleveland and Detroit. At the same time, a page in English, entitled »The Young S. N. P. J.«, began to appear in *Prosveta* once a week. Most of the first articles published on this page exhorted the youth in other Slovene settlements to create American-speaking lodges (130a; 130b; 130d). At the end of July 1926 there were 16 such lodges. By November 1928, that is three years after the beginning of the American-speaking subordinate lodge movement, it consisted of 45 lodges. As in 1926, more than half of the lodges were comprised in industrial and mining centers of Ohio, Illinois and Pennsylvania. Some lodges were located in the mining sites of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, in those of the Iron Range in Minnesota and along the coast of Lake Michigan in Wisconsin. Others were distributed in some other states (83; 97; 47).

The growth of the American-speaking subordinate lodge movement was evidenced by the content of the English page of *Prosveta*, on which a continuously increasing number of lodges published announcements and reports on their activities, and to which also individual members contributed

letters, essays, and poems. Given the large increase of the material that was provided for »The Young S.N.P.J.«, in April 1926 it was decided to edit this page in smaller print. In July 1928 it became necessary to allow the American-speaking subordinate lodge movement two pages (130f; 130g).

Many articles dealt with sport activities, with the establishment of new teams, their games, their results. Among the lodges the most popular sports were baseball, bowling and basketball, the same ones that were most widespread among the American youth as a whole. Several other articles announced or reported on picnics, at which, too, sport activities provided a prime entertainment (28; 128; 33; 81; 111).

At the picnics, as well as on other occasions, American-speaking lodges promoted other social activities. They often organized dances to the sound of 1920's American music, like the Charleston. The occasions themselves at which dances were held were typically American. Every year the lodges organized Halloween dances. Valentine dances were quite popular as well (130c; 130e; 67; 121). On the other hand, a tradition which was celebrated by the American-speaking lodges with dances was the *Pust*, the Slovene variation of the Carnival, rooted in ancient Slovene religious beliefs. It is striking that, according to what the members of the Pioneer lodge stated in *Prosveta*, until then the Slovene ethnic community, at least that in Chicago, did not celebrate this festival. The Pioneers proposed to revive it and to spread it among other American-speaking lodges as well. Not only was their celebration successful, but other lodges followed their example and began promoting *Pust* dances. It is worth noting that even on such occasions they also danced to the sound of American music (80; 89; 88; 73; 72). On the other hand, at the dance »Night in Slovenia«, which was promoted by the Pioneers in October 1926, the members of the lodge even wore the national costume »to help toward making the setting more complete« (55 : 6). Such results reveal the remarkable interaction between the Slovene and the American elements in the activities of the American-speaking lodges.

Besides the celebration of Slovene customs in their dances, the second generation also paid attention to other aspects of ethnicity. Some space of the English page of *Prosveta* was devoted to translations of Slovene literature. In May 1926 the column »Slovene Literature« was introduced with the translation of a book by Ivan Cankar, one of the most important Slovene writers. The work, entitled *Hlapec Jernej in njegova pravica* in the original, had been translated as *Yerey's Justice* by Louis Adamič. This translation by Adamič appeared in *Prosveta* before being published by Vanguard Press in book form. Indeed, all the other works of Slovene literature that were published on the English page of *Prosveta* had been translated by him (56; cf. 64; 4).

Adamič himself encouraged their publication on the page of »The Young S.N.P.J.« as well as in *Mladinski list-Juvenile*. He considered literature the most worthwhile aspect of ethnicity that the second generation had to cherish. In general, he expressed much interest in the maintenance of ethnic identity among them, although at the same time he considered the adoption of the English language indispensable and even followed H. L. Mencken's view of the decline of ethnic languages in the United States. As far as the English sections of *Prosveta* and of *Mladinski list-Juvenile* were concerned, he praised them as a kind of link established between the immigrants and the American-born youth, as a way of overcoming misunderstanding between them (24; 25; 14 — Adamič quoted pp. 667, 668).

Adamič's interest in the position of the Slovene American second generation and his contributions to the press which addressed them show that

he was directly involved in the activities of the Slovene ethnic community long before the Second World War, when he assumed a leading role in the movement supporting the resistance against the Nazi-fascist occupation in the homeland. It is evident that he applied his approach to the ethnic questions in the United States, which would gradually develop into the concept of the »Nation of Nations«, also directly to the Slovene ethnic community (cf. 1).

It is remarkable that the youth themselves in the American-speaking lodges felt the need to discuss the question of the maintenance of the ethnic language and as whole their attitude towards ethnic identity. The debate developed between the above mentioned Richard J. Zavertnik and Edwin Primosich. While the former began his activity within the American-speaking subordinate lodge movement as a member of the Pioneer Lodge in Chicago, the latter was active in the Slovene ethnic community in Cleveland. There he taught at the Slovene school which was established with the SNPJ's support in 1925. From the information in *Mladinski list-Juvenile* it may be deduced that at that time this was the only school promoted by the SPNJ. The Slovene language, literature, history, geography, singing and acting were taught on Saturdays, and several pupils sent compositions and reports on school's activities to the monthly. In 1928 and 1929 Primosich would be the first editor of *Cleveland Journal*, a weekly for the youth (101; 106 : 272; 74 : 110—111; 122 : 264; 265; 2 : 80).

In August 1926 through »The Young S.N.P.« Primosich exhorted the second generation to learn the Slovene language. He stressed its equal role among the languages of the world and stated that therefore it was worthwhile to preserve itd (86). In February and March 1927 an opposite attitude was expressed by Zavertnik. He pointed out that the economic progress of the second generation »can never be accomplished if the Slovenian youth in America will devote their spare time to the mastery of the Slovenian language« (139). He considered this conflicting with the need to »master the American language and some profession, trade, or engage in commerce« (143 : 6). On the contrary, Primosich did not perceive this contrast between aspiring to assert oneself in American society and preserving the ethnic language, as well as the ethnic identity in general.

»What we should do is to look at the fact of future assimilation as unavoidable, but we must also at the same time keep our self-respect. Anything but a gradual assimilation would harm us, as well as the American nation« (87 : 6).

Zavertnik kept defending his position through several articles on the English page of *Prosveta* for some months, until July 1927. It is remarkable that despite this effort he did not gain support from other youths who expressed their opinions in »The Young S.N.P.J.«. In the articles related to this subject they agreed with Primosich and tried, together with him, to put an end to the controversy⁶

Within this debate the question of class consciousness was addressed in some articles. In supporting Primosich's attitude the author of an article asserted with regard to the Slovene language:

⁶ Among the articles written by R. J. Zavertnik are: 136; 96a; 144; 139. Among the articles in which Primosich was supported and or the end of the polemics was determined are — 118; 68; 69; 99; 37. It is worth noting that many brief responses of this kind were published in the column »Timely Topics« (119). Primosich himself, after the above mention article in April, published his final reply to Zavertnik (85).

»I myself have greatly benefited by being able to read, write and speak it. It has been the cause of my class consciousness« (91 : 6)

It is evident from this statement that he considered his class consciousness derived from his ethnic identity, from the knowledge and experience of class struggle that he acquired within the ethnic community. On the contrary, in his reply Zavertnik denied the possibility of any positive link between ethnicity and class consciousness. He attributed to the fragmentation of the American working class along ethnic lines all the causes of the deficiencies of the labor movement in the United States (138 : 6).

In his list answer to Zavertnik, Primosich urged him to stop criticizing the Slovene ethnic community, as by doing so he would endanger it and its institutions. He stressed that in the United States there were other organizations which followed the same principles as the SNPJ and that what made the Slovenes prefer it was »purely the feeling of common parentage and appreciation of this parentage«, thus the allegiance to fraternal, freethinking, labor principles within the framework of ethnic identity (85).

The loyalty to ethnicity which many members of the American-speaking lodges expressed in the debate on the maintenance of the Slovene language may be deduced also from the development of the discussion concerning the role of the English language in the SNPJ's press. As it has been mentioned above, at the SNPJ's 8th convention in 1925 Zavertnik proposed the establishment of an organ entirely in English. The proposal was discussed and it was decided that a plan for the publication of such an organ would be put to the vote among the members of the organization. As it appears from the minutes of a meeting of the Supreme Board, held in February 1927, 7,388 members voted in favor of the English organ and 8,254 against it. However, instead of considering this result a defeat, Zavertnik defined it a step towards the final victory (21 : 85, 145—148, 226; 131 : 9—10). Indeed, still at the SNPJ's 9th convention, which was held in Chicago in May 1929, he advocated an English organ by stating that »an American-edited organ is no more a movement of segregation« than the American-speaking lodges (22 : 243).⁷ In such a way he opposed a resolution of the Supreme Board in which the introduction of a separate organ in English was considered a threat to the collaboration between Slovene — and American-speaking lodges. The opinion that indeed an organ in English was not yet timely prevailed at the convention (22 : 195). Besides, from articles on the English page of *Prosveta* it may be deduced that among the youth themselves, at least in the two large Slovene ethnic communities in Cleveland and Chicago, there was opposition to Zavertnik's attitude. The Loyalites and the Pioneers themselves, who still were the largest American-speaking lodge, agreed explicitly with the Supreme Board.

»We want to have a combined Organ, Slovene-English, in order that the senior members may know our problems and doing and we theirs, so as to enable us all to cooperate in a true fraternal spirit« (70 : 6; cf. — 46).

Such a collaboration, founded on the reciprocal understanding between the two generations, had indeed been the main goal of the American-speaking subordinate lodge movement since the beginning of its development. According to what the Pioneers stated in November 1927, at the second anniversary of their lodge, this design had not been vain.

⁷ Among the articles in which Zavertnik's attitude was expressed are: 66; 102; 120a.

»It was with that milestone that many a Slovene youth began to take interest in his nationality, for which he or she hitherto had no interest, of which he was utterly ignorant and for which on many occasions he even showed contempt« (82 : 5; cf. — 58).

Apart from the opinions expressed in the debates examined above, this result was evident from the concrete participation both in »the affairs of the neighbor lodges of the SNPJ« and in other »Slovene affairs« in various settlements (82 : 5).⁸

At the same time, in several articles published within »The Young S.N.P.J.« fraternalism, freethinking and the SNPJ's bylaws themselves were discussed. It is worth noting that, besides the language issue, Zavertnik was outstandingly prolific in this regard as well (e. g. 141; 137; 51).

As far as class struggle is concerned, the members of the American-speaking lodges rarely examined it theoretically on the English page of *Prosveta*. However, they too expressed the awareness that the capitalist society, like that in the United States, inevitably led to class conflict.

»American capitalism is just as rife with class struggles and class interest as any capitalist society abroad« (35 : 6; cf. — 142).

It is also evident from various articles that the American-speaking lodges collaborated with the Slovene socialist movement. For instance, it is worth noting their interest in the May Day issue of *Proletarec*, the organ of the Slovene socialists in the United States, and their participation in conferences of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation. In July 1928 the »Badgers«, the American-speaking lodge of Milwaukee, even had their member Joseph Radel nominated candidate of the Socialist Party to the lower house of the Wisconsin Legislature (118b; 90; 49a; 27).

The concern of the second generation within the SNPJ for concrete events related to struggles of the American labor can be observed in the articles on Sacco and Vanzetti. From May to August 1927, when they were executed, their case was followed through many articles published on the English page of *Prosveta*. While the injustice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts was stressed, the actions undertaken by the international labor, the American one and the SNPJ itself were praised and supported (98; 119c; 94; 75; 119d; 76).

Class consciousness was most often expressed by the youth in articles which reported or commented on strikes and lockouts in which Slovene immigrants were involved. For instance, in January 1927 a strike at Granert and Rothschild Clothing Company in Grays Lake, Ill. was reported. Fights between strikers and strikebreakers were pointed out as well (79; 107). In a comment upon these news other youths were urged to inform the readers of their experiences of class conflict.

»This is only one of the many stories you hear everyday. They are good lessons; let's have more, so that those who are well off now will know what might happen to them some day« (49 : 6).

In the following months of 1927 and through most of 1928 many such reports came from coal mining sites, in most cases from Pennsylvania. In April the first news and comments on lockouts in coal mines appeared on

⁸ Cf. 110; announcements of an entertainment in Cleveland promoted by the lodges »v bojs«, »Mir«, »Vipavski raj«, »Loyalites« and »Strugglers« (*Prosveta*, March 14, 1928, vol. XXI, no. 62, p. 6), announcement of a »Stalworths and Ilirija Picnic« in Kenosha (*Prosveta*, August 22, 1928, vol. XXI, no. 197, p. 6).

the English page of *Prosveta*. As these events were reported, the constantly precarious situation of coal miners was stressed and the federal government was accused of intentional hesitation in approaching their problems (119a). In July a written protest against the conduct of Pittsburgh Coal Company was sent by the SNPJ to the Sheriff of Allegheny County. In the resolution, which was also published by the American-speaking lodges, it was pointed out that by infringing the agreement with the United Mine Workers of America and trying to destroy their organization the company violated the State and Federal Laws. Above all, the damage that the »Open Shop System« implied for the miners was stressed. Besides threatening the jobs of the miners who adhered to the Union, the strikebreakers brought into the mining sites were harmful to the whole community because of their conduct.

»The Pittsburgh Coal Company has imported men of all descriptions of which many are of a desperate character, armed with deadly weapons, jeopardizing the interest of our people, and are a serious menace to the peace and safety of the citizens of this community« (95:6).

This violent behavior was also observed among strikebreakers' children. In the same resolution it was pointed out that the latter threatened the safety of other children because they carried weapons like their parents. Moreover, they menaced the health of other children because of the bad sanitary conditions in which they lived (195).

The unrest brought to the community in mining sites and to children themselves by the strikebreakers also emerges from several letters sent to *Mladinski list-Juvenile* from various settlements. As it was reported in *Prosveta* in August 1927, by then almost 170,000 miners were on strike in the coal fields in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, as well as western Pennsylvania (36). However, as all the letters on this subject which were published in the monthly in 1927 came from Pennsylvania, it may be deduced that there the situation was the hardest, at least for the Slovene miners.

Lockouts and the presence of »scabs« were reported from Pittsburgh, Wick Haven, Library, Bentleyville, and Renton. For instance, Hilda Jerich from Renton described her own experiences:

»There are children of the strike breakers who go to school with the union children, and there never is peace among the children in school« (59:379).

In her community there were policemen, who were called deputy sheriffs and state police, but they actually were »only hired gunmen from the city« and they beat miners and their families (59). Personal freedom was restricted to a large extent and children themselves were »put indoors at seven o'clock in the evening, by the deputy sheriff« (59). However, the children trusted the endurance of the United Mine Workers of America, as well as their parents' allegiance to the Union. They were so confident that they would keep striking »until they win for the good old U.M.W. of A« (59). That they dared asserting: »the Slovenian people here hold the Union better than any other nationality« (63:158— cf 108; 43; 100a).

Although to a large extent this statement can be attributed to the naïveté peculiar to children, the connections between class consciousness and ethnic pride noticeable in these letters are worth remarking. Besides, since all the letters mentioned above were written in English, this attitude can be considered a concrete example of the maintenance of intertwined class and ethnic identity beyond the gradual loss of the ethnic language.

In the following months the children of Slovene miners were offered still more opportunity for expressing such opinions. As a Slovene member of the U.M.W. of A. wrote in an article, published on the English page of *Prosveta* in January 1928, the hardships of the striking miners worsened in winter. Not only were they prevented by hired gunmen from picketing and even from assembling in the churches, but they were also thrown out of the houses owned by the coal company. So they had to move into barracks built by union miners themselves. The suffering of miners' children because of the poverty of their families was stressed above all. However, all were urged to endure the hardships until the union would win (60). The sturdiness shown by the children emerges clearly from the following sentences:

»We all have to move out of the company houses. But we do not care. We'll all stick to the union. People enjoy living in the barracks« (53:29).

The children themselves stood with their mothers on the picket lines, as mine employees were not allowed to participate in them. From Bentleyville, Pa. it was even reported in March 1928 that children from 7 to 16 years old established a club, »The Young Pioneers of America«, with the purpose of helping the striking miners. They sent their representative to a Youth Conference, held in Pittsburgh on March 18, 1928, at which strikers' problems were discussed, and they supported the miners, as they disagreed with the policies of John L. Lewis and claimed his removal from the leadership of the U.M.W. of A.. Indeed, as in dealing with the crisis in coal mines in these years Lewis exerted little influence with the coal operators, it is natural to suppose that the opposition to him spread among Slovene miners as well, and it would be worth examining further (30; 100b; 100c; 100d).⁹

Meanwhile, various actions were undertaken in order to relieve the families of striking miners at least partly of the scarcity of means. In the mining sites themselves benefit dances were promoted, as it was reported both in *Mladinski list-Juvenile* and on the English page of *Prosveta*. Some news in this regard came from Pennsylvania, others from elsewhere, like from Crested Butte, Colorado. From this mining site a big dance promoted together by the immigrants of various nationalities was reported in *Prosveta* in December 1927, and the success of the collaboration among different ethnic groups was stressed (71; 61). Dances in behalf of the strikers were promoted in other Slovene ethnic communities as well. The SNPJ's American-speaking lodges joined such events, for instance in Detroit, Cleveland, Springfield, Ill. Other financial aid was collected at lodge meetings. In this regard it was asserted:

»The organized workers know that the struggle in the effected [sic] states is their struggle. That is the reason for the generous contribution to the Relief Fund« (41:6; cf. 54; 109; 127; 103).

Financial support for miners and the supply of clothing and other goods by the SNPJ's headquarters, by various lodges and even by individual members were reported in *Mladinski list-Juvenile* as well, while many children expressed solidarity to their peers in mining sites through letters sent to the monthly (73:43; 61; 50; 65; 123; 177).

However, the miners' situation could not be improved effectively while the strikes were still going on. Thus, in some letters scarce and unequal relief was complained of, and it was pointed out that without more conspi-

⁹ With regard to the activities of John L. Lewis, cf. 6.

couous aid it was difficult for miners to keep striking (74 100d). The American-speaking lodges which were active in mining sites reported to *Prosveta* that many of their members left for Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit in search of jobs. However, they also pointed out that the depressed situation in the mining industry did not prevent the youth from preserving and even strengthening their interest in the SNPJ. Thus, in February 1928 a SNPJ's member from Onnalinda, Pa. felt the need to express his gratitude for the relief offered by the American-speaking lodges to the striking miners and at the same time promised that he would establish another such lodge in his settlement as soon as the economic situation would improve. On the other hand, in September 1928 a new American-speaking lodge began its activity in Pittsburgh itself. Another concrete proof that the strikes enhanced class consciousness, as well as the attachment to ethnic institutions among the youth was the fact that in 1927 and 1928 the children from Pennsylvania contributed the largest amount of letters to *Mladinski list-Juvenile* (42; 31: 48).

It is natural to wonder how thoroughly such experiences influenced the youth, as well as whether they offered useful lessons to the second generation in other settlements, which were not directly struck by the depressed conditions in the coal mines. One can try to suggest the possible reaction of the second generation within the Slovene ethnic community to the Depression in 1929 by taking into account these previous experiences. One can agree, for example, with the conclusions drawn by Eva Morawska in her study on Slavic immigrants in Johnstown, Pa. She concludes that the American-born members of these ethnic groups had a more self-confident attitude towards class struggle in American society than their parents. The articles on the English page of *Prosveta* and the letters in *Mladinski list-Juvenile* may indeed imply such a development of class consciousness. At the same time, it can be suggested that also in this regard the second generation were becoming more integrated in the American mainstream by striving to improve the labor position in the American society itself instead of viewing an alternative society founded on socialist principles (17:270—273).

At the same time, the changing proportions of ethnic and American influences on the attitudes of the second generation detached class consciousness from the allegiance to ideologies peculiar to immigrants' homeland. Thus, while willing to conduct class struggle from within ethnic organizations and to found it on immigrants' experiences in this regard, the American-born youth opposed the maintenance of conflicts between the progressive-socialist alignment and the catholic one of the Slovene ethnic institutions. They accused the leaders of disregarding »the profound difference between the social problems of the Slovene people in Europe and those of the Slovene immigrants in America« and of endangering the existence of their organizations by constantly stressing the mutual contrasts (45; 70a).

The American-speaking lodges felt the need to formulate their own goals more clearly and to assert them within the SNPJ's leadership, as they were aware that they represented the future core of the organization. Thus, they asked the SNPJ's leaders to call a conference of their representatives in the days before the start of the SNPJ's 9th convention, which would be held in May 1929. Their request was rejected. The convention met their demands at least partly, by establishing a National Athletic Board which would coordinate and support their sport activities (70a; 120b; 22:50—51,242—243).

However, the basic problems concerning the role and the principles of the American-speaking lodges were not solved, as the convention »disre-

garded them in their entirety» (105). Such neglect of the aspirations of the second generation again matches the conclusions drawn from the above mentioned study on Slavic ethnic groups in Johnstown, according to which the leaders of ethnic organizations were not willing to concede an equal role to the second generation membership (17:291).

While a further examination of the various aspects mentioned above within the SNPJ in the 1930s, as well as a deeper understanding of their actual impact among the ranks of the organization will be necessary, it will also be useful to ascertain to what extent and in which way such problems were approached in other Slovene fraternal organizations. Above all the changes in the KSKJ will be worth examining, as it is the second largest Slovene fraternal society in the second largest Slovene fraternal society in the United States and at the same time the most representative of the catholic alignment. Such a comparative approach should allow a better evaluation of the role that various factors, among which class consciousness, had in shaping the position of the second generation of Slovene ethnic origin in the American society.

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KLASNA SVLJEST DRUGE GENERACIJE:

ISČEKIVANJA I ODGOVORI U SLOVENSKOJ NARODNOJ POTPORNOJ ZAJEDNICI TLJEKOM 1920-ih GODINA

SAŽETAK

Od svog osnutka godine 1904, »Slovenska potporna jednota« razvijala je među svojim članstvom liberalistička shvaćanja i socijalističke poglede na svijet. Ova organizacija postigla je velike uspjehe u svom radu među američkim Slovincima, i kao fraternalistička organizacija zaslužna je za razvoj socijalističkog pokreta. Preko svoga glasila *Prosvete* koji se dijelom štampao i na engleskome, privlačila je u svoje redove i drugu generaciju američkih Slovenaca.

Ovaj rad obuhvaća djelovanje »Slovenske potporne jednote« do 1920, a kao primarni izvori za referat upotrebljeni su tiskani materijali kao što su *Prosveta* i *Mladinski list-Juvenile*.