
Cahan Says the *Forward* Supports the Party: Editor of Great Jewish Daily, Back from Europe, Declares Seceders Will be Fought — Praises Germans and Scores Communists Abroad

by William M. Feigenbaum

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attributed to William M. Feigenbaum based on content and style.

“Our sacred duty is to build up the Socialist party. We must work to build up the party. Weak as it is, if anyone seeks to make it weaker, to disrupt it, he is a criminal.”



That was Abraham Cahan's greeting to his friends and co-workers on the *Jewish Daily Forward* upon his return to New York yesterday, after an absence of 14 weeks in Europe, at a luncheon given him at the Hotel Brevoort. Cahan arrived on the French liner *Paris* in the morning [Sept. 11, 1921].

Cahan's statement that he intended to do more party work than ever before was the answer that had been eagerly awaited as to his stand and the stand of the *Jewish Daily Forward* following the split in the Jewish Socialist Federation, which took with it a number of the *Forward's* writers who aligned themselves with the Federation and against the Socialist Party. From the moment he stepped from the ship, Cahan was engaged in discussion of the events that led up to last Sunday's [Sept. 4, 1921] division in the Federation.

The discussion at the luncheon and in the speeches following centered around this split and its effect upon the *Forward*.

“No man can write against the Socialist Party and remain on the *Forward*,” said the editor of the

Jewish daily.

The 75 guests stood up and cheered.

Before the speaking the following telegram was read from Benjamin Schlesinger, President of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, who is also President of the Forward Association:

Glad Comrade Cahan is back. *Forward* and whole Jewish labor movement needs him and his great abilities more now than ever before. The open and masked enemies of our organization and our press must once and for all be exposed and ousted.

Schlesinger is out of town on a vacation.

The telegram referred to the leaders of the Jewish Federation who carried on a campaign against the party in the labor unions as well as in the party.

Alexander Kahn of the Forward Association, who presided at the luncheon, outlined the story of the Federation's convention [Sept. 3-5, 1921] and its aftermath, saying that the leaders of the Federation and the *Forward* writers who were going with them were not the ones who had built up the labor movement, but were men who came to the United States when the labor movement had been built up and who became writers and lecturers.

Foes Ignorant of Movement.

“They do not know what the labor movement really means,” he said, “and their work in trying to

break it up is nothing short of a crime.”

N. Chanin, Secretary of the Jewish Socialist Alliance [Verband], the organization of Jewish Socialists that remained in the party, told the inside story of the organization of the split. He said that the Federation leaders represented a minority of the Jewish workers in the country. Saul Metz of the Cloak Makers' Union said that the Communists, under the direction of a representative of the Communist International in New York, were carrying on a campaign to control the union.

“Persons in Moscow,” said Metz, “selected a certain member for the Executive Board of our union, and their followers were to work to elect him. The man was a member of the union years ago, but the Moscow leaders didn't know that he had been out of the union and in business for 4 years. When we held an election for 36 business agents, the Communists put up a ticket. The fight was a battle between the Communists and the Socialists in the union for control. Over 8,000 votes were cast, and the Communists didn't elect a single candidate. The result of the election was that a number of our union leaders, friendly to the Socialist Party, began to join the party in great numbers. With the Communists it is rule or ruin.”

Cahan was greatly interested. When Metz said that the Communists had been routed in the union election, he applauded vigorously.

Samuel P. Kramer, Louis Schaffer, B. Weinstein, Harry Lang, Meyer Gillis, and A. Schonberg delivered short addresses of welcome. William Morris Feigenbaum spoke a few words of welcome on behalf of *The Call*.

Cahan was given a warm greeting when he arose to speak. He explained that he had gone abroad for personal reasons, to bring over Mrs. Cahan's sister, Miss Nina Baunstein. Miss Braunstein was with him, and his mission had succeeded completely.

“The Forward Association, in giving me the warm send-off 14 weeks ago, and in this welcome has been more than generous,” he said. “Mrs. Cahan and I appreciate it.”

The editor then launched into the one subject that all the guests were interested in, the world Socialist situation and the recent split in the Federation.

Enemies Barred from *Forward*.

“I am sorry that we must lose some of our best people,” said Cahan, “but if they are against the party, that settles it. No one who is against the party can be on the *Forward*. The *Forward* was established for the party, not the party for the *Forward*.”

“Some of the intellectuals want the Third International. For an American to speak of the Third International is a sign of absolute idiocy — if not of a police spy. In Europe, people know that the Third International is an absolute failure. It is a joke. Lenin would like to get rid of it if he could. No one takes it seriously any more. The Third International has done 1,000 times more damage to the Socialist movement than good.”

Cahan did not visit Russia, but he spent 9 weeks in Berlin.

“Berlin is a whole world,” he said, “it is a wonder city. The whole world passes before you there. I met officials of the Soviet government, and I discussed matters with them for long and weary hours. They know all about the *Forward* in Moscow, and they know that no matter how we differ with the Communist leaders in theory, the *Forward* is the friend and staunch supporter of Soviet Russia, and it will continue to be. And the more we differ in theory the more strongly will we support Russia.”

Soviet Leaders See Failure.

“The Soviet leaders realize that Communism, as they applied it, has not succeeded. That is why Lenin has been so anxious to get the policy of the Soviet government changed. If the Germans had established a Soviet it would have been successful. If you want a job well done, get Germans to do it.

“The German people are getting to work. The Social Democratic Party, the old party, has lost its chauvinism. It is growing enormously. Scheidemann has lost all his influence in the party and today it is the only Socialist party in the republic.

“The Communist there amount to nothing. It is an open secret that the March ‘putsch’ that the Communist International approves of, and then doesn't, was arranged and managed and ordered by Bela Kun, one of the leading men in the Communist Interna-

tional. The leading Communist members of the Soviet government that I spoke to admit that the whole Communist movement, and the hope of a world revolution, on which the Communist International is based, is done for.

Proletariat Different Here.

“In Europe there is a class-conscious working class. The workers there are born workers, and they know they are workers. There is nothing else for them to be; in America every worker thinks that he is going to be a capitalist or President some day. They think it is a democracy. It is snobocracy. We must understand that trait in the American character before we can do anything with the workers here and make them Socialists.”

The tables were banked with flowers, gifts of friends and organizations.

Among those present at the pier and at the luncheon were: Alexander Kahn, U. Solomon, Julius Gerber, Abe Beckerman, Max D. Danish, Morris Hillquit, Abe Tuvim, S. Hurok, Jacob Adler, A. Katzenstein, Leon Gottlieb, and Barnet Fineberg.

The writers of the *Forward* who have decided to cast their lot with the Federation and withdraw from the party were invited to the luncheon, but they sent word that they would not attend. They signified their intention of sending a committee to Cahan shortly and presenting their side.

Among other passengers on the Paris were Joseph Gollomb, B. Maimon of the Washington bureau of the *Forward*, and Henry G. Alsberg of *The Nation*.

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