

SLAVS AND MINERS-

AN INTERESTING POSITION

UNION REFUSES RECOGNITION.

OF RUSSIAN NATURALISATION PAPERS.

RUSSIAN CONSULS INTERVIEWED

A somewhat difficult position has arisen in reference to the attitude of the Federated Miners' Union towards Southern Slavs recently under Austrian rule to whom provisional certificates of naturalisation have during the last few days been issued by Captain J. Serennikoff, a military attache from the Russian Consulate in Melbourne, on behalf of the Russian Government. The Miners' Union at a meeting held last night passed a resolution stating, "That this union regards as enemy subjects all persons

gards as enemy subjects all persons of enemy origin not naturalised before February, 1916, and any attempt to re-employ them in the mining industry under the guise of Russians or other Allies will be regarded by this union as a deliberate attempt to create industrial warfare."

M. Serennikoff arrived in the State early in the week, and proceeded immediately to the goldfields. His visit was the outcome of negotiations between the Slavs connected with the Boulder Croatian-Slavonic Society and the Russian Consul-General, under whose protection, by proclamation of the Russian Government, all southern Slavs were brought after the outbreak of war. Full details of the nationality of every member of the society, number about 120 in all, were forwarded to the Consul-General, with the object of proving each man's Slav birth, and on the arrival of M. Serennikoff at Boulder on Wednesday last, those who had satisfied the Consulate that they were bona-fide Slavs were issued with provisional certificates of naturalisation, pending the issue of naturalisation papers. Under this provisional certificate the Consul-General requests the

ificate the Consul-General requests the civil and military authorities of the Federal and State Governments to exempt the holder from the restrictions imposed on alien enemies, short of permitting him to leave the Commonwealth. Practically every member of the society who had not taken out naturalisation papers from the Commonwealth Government was issued with this certificate, in addition to other Slavs outside the society.

A "Daily News" reporter this morning interviewed M. Serennikoff regarding the position created by the resolution of the Miners' Union refusing to alter the decision come to by it not to work with enemy subjects, including Slavs under Austrian rule, after February 6 last. M. Serennikoff explained that from the point of view of his Government the Slavs had never been regarded as enemy subjects, but pointed out that now that they had been taken under the protection of Russia, the Government of that country would do all it could to protect their interests. He could not say what action would be taken as an outcome of the resolution of the Miners' Union. That was a body which his Government could not recognise. It recognised only the au-

authority of the Federal and State Governments, and some sound reason would doubtless have to be given before those Governments would approve of the view taken by the union in regarding men, whom Russia had taken under her protection, as enemy subjects. He desired to point out that the only question which had been taken into consideration in issuing the provisional certificates was that of nationality. The question of loyalty to the Allies was one purely for the Australian military authorities, but, of course, if to the personal knowledge of the officials of the Russian Consulate any man was known to harbor disloyal sentiments, he would not be permitted to become a naturalised Russian subject. What action would be taken as an outcome of the attitude of the union he was not in a position to state at present, but those Slavs who had been taken under Russian protection could rest assured that the Government of that country would do everything that lay in its power in their behalf.

Mr. P. Michelides, the local Russian Consul, pointed out that by Commonwealth proclamation it was provided that Slavs under Austrian rule among

that Slavs, under Austrian rule, among others, should not be deemed enemy subjects, so that the only question that could have influenced the minds of the unionists was as to whether the Slavs on the goldfields—the so-called enemy subjects—were bona-fide Slavs or not. Now that their nationality had been exhaustively inquired into by the Russian Government, and they had satisfied the Consulate as to their bona-fides, there could be no good reason for refusing to work with them. "The action of the union," said Mr. Michelides, "appears to me to be based on an entirely erroneous conclusion."

M. Serrenikoff left on his return of Melbourne to-day. Future developments in connection with the matter will be awaited with interest.