

# THE FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

**T**HE year 1934 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the foundation of the Young Communist International.

The creation of the Y.C.I. was preceded by a long struggle on the part of Lenin (the Bolsheviks) against the opportunist attitude towards the role of the youth in the class struggle displayed by the Social-Democratic Parties and by the Second International to which they were affiliated.

The creation of the Y.C.I. was preceded by sagacious, stubborn, prolonged work on the part of Lenin among the revolutionary inclined sections of the West-European youth. It was preceded by the overcoming of its political immaturity, its theoretical confusion and the serious political mistakes on the most important questions of the class struggle. For the very reason that the development of the revolutionary youth movement cannot be studied and investigated apart from the working class movement, apart from the struggle which Lenin (the Bolsheviks) carried on and are still carrying on against opportunism, it is evident that the history of the Y.C.I. cannot be limited to these fifteen years alone. But it is an absolutely indisputable historical fact, however, that the first congress of the Y.C.I. was called on the initiative of the great founder of the international Communist youth movement—Lenin—and that this congress took place in Berlin in 1919.

It is indisputable, moreover, that the chief role in fulfilling Lenin's idea—of creating the Y.C.I. and convening its first Congress—was played by the Russian Young Communist League which was fighting under the Comintern banner for unity among the Left Socialist youth organizations. However, in spite of this and other obvious facts, Kemrod\* has asserted that "the international conference of the Socialist youth which took place in Stuttgart in 1907" may be taken as the first congress of the Y.C.I. This, in a more cautious way, has been pointed out by Schiller,\*\* another poor historian.

These incorrect viewpoints compel us first and foremost to throw some light upon the role and importance of the Stuttgart conference in the international revolutionary movement as a whole.

## STUTTGART

A complete and clear idea of the struggle carried

\* Kemrod: worked as editor of the periodical, *Smena*. Author of several symposiums on questions of the history of the Y.C.I.

\*\* Richard Schiller: from 1919 to 1928, member of the Presidium of the Y.C.I. Now working in the Austrian Communist Party.

on by Bolshevism against reformism and Centrism, even in the pre-war years, and against the social-chauvinists and Kautskyists during the war, on the question of the participation of the youth in the class struggle, can be seen from a conscientious study of the works of Lenin, of the documents of the Bolshevik Party and of the Second International. The consistent and unswerving viewpoint defended by Lenin on the revolutionary education of the youth can be expressed briefly in his own famous words:

"All knowledge of Communism from Communist pamphlets and publications is absolutely worthless without work, without the struggle. . . .

". . . We must stand unconditionally for organizational independence for the Youth League, not only because the opportunists are afraid of independence of this kind, but for the real essence of the problem itself. For without complete independence, the youth cannot either make themselves good Socialists or prepare to bring socialism forward."

Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht came close to understanding this Leninist definition of the fundamental tasks of the revolutionary education of the youth.

However, their efforts to create and activate the youth organizations in the class struggle, within the framework of the Second International, were unsuccessful. They were unsuccessful because the Second International and its parties were Marxist in words, in their resolutions, while pursuing a policy of collaboration with the bourgeoisie in actual practice, which determined their disgraceful bankruptcy during the imperialist war. An opportunist viewpoint reigned in the Second International concerning the organizational independence of the youth and their participation in the class struggle. This was expressed concretely in the fact that the youth were deprived not only of organizational independence, but of the right to any active political life and struggle.

The Socialist youth organizations which grew up regardless of the will of the Second International leadership were under a guardianship which aimed at converting them into cultural and non-political organizations. The more active elements in the youth movement, however, headed by Karl Liebknecht, could not reconcile themselves to this attitude to the role of the youth. In 1907, at the international conference in Stuttgart, they tried to create an international organization of youth organizations and to define their main political tasks. This attempt to create an international youth organization and to

define its main political tasks within the framework of the Second International was doomed to failure.

The International Youth Bureau formed at the Stuttgart conference was not a leading organ, but a politically inactive organ for information, which, together with the Second International, ceased to exist during the war. The conference decisions did not arm the youth organizations for struggle against capitalism. The decisions did not coincide with the Leninist doctrine of the role of the youth in the class struggle and led the youth organizations towards political passivity. Consequently, the Stuttgart conference constitutes the first attempt of the young Socialist organizations to create an international organization of the youth, and is not the first Y.C.I. congress, which laid the foundations for the new stage in the development of the international revolutionary youth movement.

#### BERNE

Certain "historians" as, for example, Munzenberg, try to prove that the Y.C.I. was formed actually not in 1907 and not in 1919, but in 1915, at the Berne conference of Young Socialist organizations. They want to prove that what took place in Berlin in 1919 was merely the "transformation" of the Youth International founded at Berne, into the Y.C.I.; or, in other words, what "had already come about politically long ago", had then taken shape.

This is untrue and does not correspond to the historical facts.

What is true is that in 1915, during the war, a conference of Left Socialist youth organizations took place in Berne. At this conference a new international organization was formed which defined the main tasks of the youth organizations in the struggle against imperialist war.

However, the fact cannot be deleted from the history of the international youth movement that *the Berne conference came out against the Leninist proposals of the Bolsheviks* concerning the fight against imperialist war, and rejected them.

And so Munzenberg took upon himself a thankless task, quite beyond his strength, when he tried to refute Lenin, who pointed out that the Berne youth conference constituted at best a step "marking time" in the struggle against the social-chauvinist parties which entered the service of the bourgeoisie.

How can we, after that, assert that the Berne conference and those who convened it, laid the foundations of the Young Communist International?

This must not be done especially because of the fact that Lenin tirelessly sought to overcome their theoretical confusion, politically incorrect theories and mistakes, and to bring closer to Bolshevism the youth organizations whom he highly esteemed in the struggle against imperialist war. The same attitude did

he have against the *International of Youth*, a magazine which was published during the war.

This stage of the development of the youth movement deserves serious study; but what has been said is sufficient to make clear how certain "historians" distort the facts.

#### BERLIN

Lenin is the founder of the Young Communist International. It was on his initiative and with the active support of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union and under the guidance of the Comintern, that the first congress of the Young Communist International was convened in 1919.

The following were represented at this congress: the Comintern, the Russian Young Communist League, the Communist organization of the German Volga Republic, Poland, Hungary, the Socialist youth organizations of Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Spain, and Austria.

The convening of this congress signified the organizational and political unity of the scattered youth organizations on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist program of the Comintern, which unites all the revolutionary forces of the working class in the struggle against capitalism and for the proletarian dictatorship. The formation of the Y.C.I. opened up a new epoch in the international revolutionary youth movement.

The creation of the Y.C.I. and its affiliation to the Comintern required enormous reorganizations of the revolutionary youth organizations which had joined the Y.C.I. It was necessary to overcome the confusion that reigned inside of them on basic political questions. It was not merely a question of "transforming" and shaping what "had already come about long ago".

During the first Y.C.I. congress, this was still not clear to many congress delegates, including Munzenberg himself, who headed the Berne International.

At the first congress, the representatives of the youth organizations unanimously decided to affiliate ideologically to the Comintern. However, on the question of affiliation to the Comintern, of organizational connections with it and of recognizing the leadership of the Comintern, many delegates, including Munzenberg, had hesitations and doubts which developed into openly advocating *non-affiliation* to the Comintern.

At the first congress these hesitations were overcome. After this congress, right up to the second congress of the Y.C.I., misunderstandings of the Leninist doctrine on the role of the youth in the class struggle were reflected again in the work of the E.C. of the Y.C.I.

#### UNDER THE BANNER OF THE COMINTERN

The creation of the Y.C.I., its development and

consolidation, is a brilliant page in the struggle of Lenin (the Bolsheviks) against opportunism both in the working class and in the youth movement, in the struggle to educate the youth in the spirit of Communism.

Fifteen years have passed since the opening of the first inaugural congress of the Y.C.I. It is difficult today to name a country where there is no Section of the Y.C.I. or any Communist youth organization. In the country which is victoriously building socialism, the leading Section of the Y.C.I. has become a mighty organization with millions of members who are selflessly fighting under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party to build up a classless socialist society.

In the capitalist countries, the Communist youth with its heroic struggle for the proletarian dictatorship and for the interests of the working class and youth calls forth the bestial hatred of the bourgeoisie and the admiration of the toilers.

In Spain the Young Communists under the leadership of the Communist Party have won for themselves the honored name of foremost fighters against capitalism, in the barricade fights side by side with the revolutionary workers and miners of Asturias and of the whole country.

In China, the Young Communist League is the most loyal supporter of the Communist Party in its struggle against international imperialism and on behalf of the Soviet Government. The heroic Young Communist regiments and divisions of the Red Army have covered themselves with undying glory in the heroic fight against the mercenary white army of Chiang Kai-shek.

In countries of fascist terror and unbridled reaction—Japan, Germany, Poland, Italy, Bulgaria—everywhere, in Cuba and in far off Indo-China, the Young Communists are bearing high the Leninist banner of the Comintern, the banner of irreconcilable class struggle against capitalism.

The bourgeoisie is striving to annihilate physically the Young Communists who are preparing for the overthrow of capitalism.

Hundreds of our best comrades have perished in the ruthless class struggle.

Thousands more have been thrown into jails, sentenced to hard labor and concentration camps by the hangmen.

But the terror cannot prevent the growth of Communist influence and the development of the revolutionary youth movement.

The bourgeoisie is powerless to educate the youth in a slavish spirit or tear them from the class struggle, by establishing a compulsory system of fascization and militarization of the youth.

The task of the Young Communist Leagues today is not to record November 20, formally, as the date of the opening of the Y.C.I. congress, but to test

the whole road of struggle that has been passed during these fifteen years.

Many Young Communist Leagues are still not mass organizations, and in some places even now the work of these organizations, both as regards character and methods adopted, resembles the work of the Socialist youth organizations, which are little active.

It is for just this reason that it is of especially great importance today to explain the role which Lenin played in the international youth movement and to arm all Young Communists and young workers with the Leninist doctrines of the class struggle.

The most important thing in putting the Leninist doctrine into practice is to gather millions of the youth on the basis of the united front and under the banner of the Comintern to fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat and for a Soviet government.

In fighting for all this, even for the smallest economic, political and cultural interests of the youth, we must, with the whole of our energy, mobilize the youth to fight against the danger of an imperialist attack upon the Soviet Union and against the danger of imperialist war.

While fighting with all determination against chauvinism and nationalism, every Young Communist should firmly remember the instructions of Comrade Stalin, who carries forward the work of Lenin, the mighty leader of the working class: "Internationalism is the basic idea which runs throughout the work of the Young Communist League. Therein lies its strength. Therein is its might."

What can divide the Young Socialists and the Y.C.L.'ers in Spain who fought together in October and who are now suffering equally from the white terror which can only be compared to the terror after the Paris Commune? There is no force which would be capable of destroying this alliance, sealed with the blood of those who died in the struggle. The Y.C.L. is now faced with an enormous task—of inculcating this idea among the broad masses of the youth and explaining to these masses in the light of the October struggles all the questions of principle, tactics and methods of struggle of the Y.C.L.

Thus the Y.C.L. of Spain under the leadership of the Communist Party will continue the struggle with greater force than ever to win the majority of the working class youth for the triumph of Communism.

The Lerroix government, this Spanish Thiers, is now using severe and inhuman repression against the heroic Spanish proletariat. Thousands of old and young workers have died under the fire of the cannon and the military squadrons of the "Versailles troops". Sixty thousand working class fighters are entombed in capitalist dungeons, and the special military courts have condemned scores to death or to lifelong imprisonment. The danger of the death sentence hangs

over the heads of the best soldiers of the workers' and peasants' revolution. Drunken colonial troops swagger through the workers' sections as through a conquered territory. It is a matter of honor for the youth and for the working class of the whole world to hold back the bloody attack of fascism and help the Spanish proletariat to restore its forces.

The working class of Spain has retreated, but is not defeated. The struggle still continues. Armed with the experience obtained in the October fighting, the working class is aiming to raise the banner of Soviet Power, which waved victoriously for 15 days in Asturias, over the whole of the Soviet Socialist Republics of Spain.