

YOUNG VANGUARD

- - A Section Devoted to Problems of the Working Class Youth - -

The Decline of the Y. C. I.

The present crisis in the Young Communist International is a direct reflection of the situation in the Comintern. The latter, under the leadership of Stalinist Centrism, with its policy of national "socialism", and the conversion of the Communist parties into automaton to carry out its bureaucratic orders, finds itself in a state of disintegration.

The Young Communist International as a section of the Comintern, has the same political and tactical line as the latter. Therefore the mistakes of the Comintern become the mistakes of the Y. C. I. The bureaucracy in the Comintern and its sections has more than its equal in the Leagues and the Y. C. I. Mechanical calling of conferences, bureaucratic appointments with complete disregard for the mass of the membership, mechanical use of Party slogans and policies for youth work, bureaucratic carrying out of decisions, (as "proletarianization" and "nationalization") etc. are prevalent in every League in the Y. C. I. The well-known Stalinist abhorrence for revolutionary theory has its fitting supplement in the almost complete absence of educational work in the Leagues. The fundamentals of Marxism, the teaching of Lenin, the history of the Comintern and the Y. C. I., the history of the Russian October, are unknown to the average League functionary, not to speak of the average member. The above, when taught, is falsified—officially called "popularized". (See Stalin's "Leninism" as a model.)

Simultaneous with the declining influence and numerical strength of the Comintern since 1924, the Y. C. I. was transformed from an organization of over a million (exclusive of the Soviet Union) to, according to the report of Furenberg at the recent Plenum of the E. C. Y. C. I., a little over eighty thousand (83,067 to be exact). (This is less than one half the number of members it had in November, 1919, the time of the First Congress.) In every country, with the exception of the Soviet Union, the Leagues are small sects with little influence over the working youth, mere shadows of the Communist parties (although theoretically the former is supposed to be more of a mass organization than the party.)

The Fifth Congress of the Y. C. I. settled the entire question in a very simple manner. It reiterated the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern on the necessity of a new line, the third period, the Right danger as the main one, and issued the slogan of: To the masses. These decisions were patented to give an impetus to the growth of "mass young Leninist leagues". A genuine discussion of policy and tactics; a critical analysis of the conditions of the young workers in the various countries; steps to educate the membership of the Leagues; ways and means of drawing the working youth into the struggle, these and similar questions were absent from the proceedings. It is no longer necessary to follow such tedious and "academic" procedure—for don't we know that in the present, the "third period", the young workers are becoming radicalized, that the Communists are the only true representatives of the workers and, ipso facto, the communist youth leagues will grow? Such reasoning sometimes with the most naive consciousness, other times unwittingly, is the prevalent logic of the young Stalinist leadership, internationally and nationally.

Y. C. I. Follows the False Path of the C. I.

Since the Fifth Congress, the Y. C. I. conducted the following mass activity. On July 20th and 21st of last year an International Anti-Imperialist Youth Conference was held at Frankfurt-on-the-Main, Germany, for the purpose of forming "youth sections" of the Anti-Imperialist Leagues in the various countries. The advisability of such a conference, even from a principle point of view, is highly questionable. The conducting and leading of the struggle against Imperialism is the tasks of the Comintern and its sections, especially the Y. C. I. To organize the petty-bourgeois liberals and socialists into an organization and expect them to carry on a consistent fight against imperialism is to close one's

eyes to the history of the liberal and socialist betrayals. Nevertheless, the Y. C. I., in calling into existence the above conference, once again mechanically and with as much reason, followed the policy of the Comintern in its organization of the World League Against Imperialism—which has contained such celebrated and consistent anti-imperialists as, Lansbury, Cook, Sandino, the elder Nehru. The first two were official spokesmen of the organization for some time, while the latter were colonial "heroes."

The proceedings of the conference were very simple. Representatives of petty bourgeois colonial groups and representatives of Communist Youth Leagues present reported on their activities. William Rust, who helped ruin the British League, and served Stalin in lining up the American League at its last convention, gave the report for the Executive Committee of the Y. C. I. He urged the necessity of anti-imperialist work and the formation of youth sections of the Anti-Imperialist League. Two days were spent in discussion. Not a single new youth section has been formed since then—anti-imperialist activity in the League is less now than ever before—the E. C. Y. C. I. which convened the Conference did not even consider it important enough to discuss its resolutions and proceedings.

The May Day and August First Fiascoes

The sections of the Y. C. I. took part in the May Day affairs of the Parties and shared in the latter's failure to arouse the masses; it participated in the August 1st demonstrations. In reference to this, Manuilsky tells us: "On the eve of August 1st—we said to you, comrades of the Y. C. I.—organize a number of demonstrations in the street before August 1st, dissipate the strength of the enemy, don't let him have a breathing-space. Did you pay heed to this call, did you respond to it? you who declaim about being rendered unpolitical? Did you, with the exception of timid efforts in Germany organize many such demonstrations in other countries?" Following this failure, the Y. C. I. called for the annual International Youth Day, September 1st, as a continuation of August 1st—and it was! Due to false political policy, an incorrect approach to the youth, lack of preparation, absence of the united front tactic, International Youth Day went the way of August 1st—no large sections of the working youth were mobilized.

Big Loss in Membership

The national sections of the Y. C. I. were just as impotent. In the period between the Fifth Congress and the recent plenum, the French League lost, according to official reports, one thousand members, (it fell from 7,000 to 6,000). In Great Britain, although the League had made great strides during the British miners' strike and the General Strike in 1926, had dropped to 900 members at the time of the Fifth Congress, and now has about 300. In Germany, the Brandlerite (Right Wing) youth succeeded in organizing a group, which has resulted in the loss to the Communist movement of many young workers, some going over to the Right wing, some leaving the movement entirely. In Czechoslovakia, the League in a period of one year has declined in membership 50%—from 12,000 to 6,000. In the United States the League has fallen to a little over fifteen hundred members (1589). Not a single youth section of a trade union or auxiliary organization had been formed. Meanwhile, we witness the attempts on the part of the social democracy to revive and activate its youth sections. In Germany the social democratic youth is taking an increasing active part in the strikes led by the social democratic controlled trade unions; in England, the Guild of Youth of the Independent Labour Party, after being made impotent by the winning over of many of its best elements by the Y. C. I. of Great Britain, is showing signs of life; even in the United States, where the national movement of the socialist youth has been practically non-existent since the war, the Socialist Party is attempting to resurrect it. The Leagues of the Y. C. I. are carrying on no work

against the young social-reformists. In a period when the young workers are beginning to show signs of active struggle, the absence of alert and active Communist youth Leagues, give the social democratic youth an exceptional broad base for growth.

With these facts before it, the Plenum, recently held, had as its main task a thorough review of the policies and tactics of the Leagues and the Y. C. I. including the line of its Fifth Congress, and the position of the Sixth Congress and Tenth Plenum of the Comintern. To prevent this, was the function of the Comintern representatives to the Plenum, Manuilsky and Remmele.

Manuilsky Passes the Buck

At this meeting, self criticism reigned—the Comintern representatives criticized the work of the Y. C. I. For example, Manuilsky said: "In words you stand for the third period, but in deed you are still in the second period." What criticism could be worse than this! The political resolution (which was eventually carried) was said to indicate "fear of the masses". The slogan, "To the masses" is insufficient, said Manuilsky, unless we carry on a struggle against the Left danger, that is, the sectarian tendency which leads to isolation. In spite of this, the resolutions and decisions of the Tenth Plenum were reiterated. Some of the comrades could not completely swallow the statement that the reason (!) for the present condition of the Y. C. I. is the "sectarian isolation and separation from the basic mass of the working youth which dominates in the organizations of the Y.C.I."

Lovestone's Whining Baby

The long awaited Revolutionary Youth organ of the youth members of the Lovestone group has finally graced us with its maiden debut. Expressing intentions of becoming the fighting organ of the American youth movement, the beacon light for the training of young Communists, and the herald of all that is "revolutionary", "Leninist," etc. it actually typifies in the main the characteristics of the whole composition of the Lovestone group. It goes without saying that Revolutionary Youth embodies none of these forms; on the contrary, it exhibits the worse features that have become attached to the body of the Communist movement.

The problems of the American League have not grown up today. The decline, both organizationally and politically of the Y. C. I., its cynicism, high politics, lack of vital activity, and all the retarding conditions of the Communist Youth League, are not the product alone of the present leadership. While it is true that the present regime of Harvey, Green, Rijack, has only accentuated these conditions, basically they have been part of the League from the period of the Lovestone-Zam leadership.

Present Disintegration of the League

The present leadership despite its strict adherence to the "leftward" swing in the Comintern, actually carries over all the features of the former opportunistic and bureaucratic leadership. The heritage of the Harvey-Green-Rijack (Steuben) leadership from the former Lovestone-Zam clique was a non-appearing Young Worker, a pitifully small membership, a League that was apathetic to its tasks, that was virtually non-existent as a factor in the revolutionary movement. This inheritance found fitting executors in the present regime, who while differing in their political affiliations, are for all practical purposes alike in their concepts of the needs of the League, and the methods of building a mass youth movement. Not only has the present leadership failed to better substantially the state of affairs left by the former ruling group, but it is responsible for the further decline and disintegration of the League.

Revolutionary Youth offers no solution for these conditions. Upon the heads of the Rubinstains, Silvis, Lurys, Zams, Herbergs, as well as the present Harveys, Rijacks and Greens, lie the shortcomings of the League. The attempts of the Lovestone youth section to cry for democracy, discussion, mass work, organization, etc. can only draw crocodile tears from the members of the Communist Opposition. Only a year ago we were faced with the same bureaucratic expulsions, lack of opportunity of discussion and sluggings from the same group that finds it expedient today, to discover that the principles of Communist organization are mercilessly looted by the present Stalinist adventurer.

It is apparent from the situation that

Some ventured that while that was true enough as a condition of the Leagues, the cause must be sought in the political policy and tactics of the Y. C. I. This "doctrinaire" conception was readily dismissed by Stalin's representatives, and the Plenum found itself once again in complete "agreement".

The Opposition Youth is Taking Hold

The young workers in the Opposition, who fought the false policies and leadership of the existing Leagues and supported the International Opposition led by comrade Trotsky, have the important task of educating the working youth, inside and outside the official Leagues in the principles of Communism. In France our young comrades are actively participating in trade union activity; in Mexico they are taking the initiative in forming a strong Opposition group; in Canada and the United States, they are taking an active part in the work of the Communist League of America (Opposition); and lastly, and of utmost importance, in the Soviet Union, our comrades are winning over more and more young workers to our position; a recent report in *Izvestia* states the disbanding of two Kom-somol nuclei for being "nests of Trotskyites". This work must be increased. The publications of the Opposition must devote more space to youth questions, where feasible, special youth organizations should be formed, all efforts should be made to win the young workers and especially, the Communist youth for the principles of Marxism, for the Opposition.

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exists in the League (which cannot be and is not separate and apart from the general conditions prevalent in the Party, and for that matter in the Comintern and Y. C. I.) that the problems of building a mass youth movement are far greater and deeper than the personalities in the leadership. Revolutionary Youth clarifies nothing. It actually brings on greater confusion.

Needs of the League

What is necessary at this juncture is a reevaluation of the principles that accompanied the organization of the Y. C. I. Clarification is sorely needed on the following questions: What is and what should be the character of the Communist youth leagues? What shall be the attitude towards the question of "vanguardism"? What shall be the attitude on the question of "independence"? What are the main problems and the immediate tasks of the Youth? What is the attitude of the youth movement on the burning questions of principle between the Centrist leadership and the Leninist Opposition?

A discussion of these questions and the arrival at their proper decisions will fundamentally alter the course of disintegration of the youth Leagues. A correct solution would spell death to the sophistication, high politics, cynicism and opportunist adventurism that today pervades the youth movement. To these and other questions, subsequent issues of the Militant will devote itself.

—A. M. G.

FOODLESS MOTHER TRIES SUICIDE

DETROIT—(FP)—Rescued after an attempt at suicide in the Detroit River here, Vida Britton, unemployed waitress and mother of two, tells a pitiful tale of hunger and misery in "dynamic" Detroit.

"I've worked so hard, and life is so hard," she sighed, as she told of hard work as a waitress bringing in a few pennies a day. "Business slumped and I lost my job."

Mrs. Britton then went to work as a dancing partner in a local dancing school. "I had to depend on taxi-dancing for a living. Sometimes I barely earned enough to buy food, let alone pay my share of the apartment rent where I lived. I earned 40 a dance. These last weeks I sometimes didn't earn more than 50c a night. I couldn't live on that. Half the time I didn't get enough to eat. Things went from bad to worse.

"I love dancing but dancing, night after night isn't so easy as it sounds. Whether you are tired or not, whether you like your partner or not, you must dance. I couldn't be pleasant to people half of the time, and that was bad for my income. There was nobody to whom I could look for help."

And so Vida Britton tried to drown herself.