

THE YOUNG VANGUARD

The Breakdown of the Mexican League

The period from April 1929 until August of the same year when the III Congress of the Young Communist Federation of Mexico was celebrated, was one of rapid progress for the Mexican Communist Youth movement. From a small number of non-functioning units, composed mostly of peasants with a disorganized central apparatus, an organization of 660 effective members in over 30 units and a central executive in which half a dozen departments functioned regularly was built up. During this same period, it is well to observe, the Communist Party of Mexico was disintegrating and losing one important position after the other, in the trade union and anti-imperialist movements, and also in the "Workers and Peasants Bloc" that had been formed opportunistically through concessions to the petty bourgeois directors of the National Peasants League (Galvan and Co.).

The national plenum of the C. C. of the Party was obliged to recognize in July 1929 that the youth federation had a better status than the Party and it was generally accepted that the Y. C. F. had more effective members in its organization than the Party itself.

The Apparatus Men Get Busy

At this stage, preparations for the III National Congress of the Y. C. F. of Mexico were made and a representative of the Young Communist International, comrade Matlin appeared on the scene. Already there had been several minor struggles on technical questions between the C.E.C. of the Y.C.F. and the C.E.C. of the C.P. in all of which the personal political interests of E. Sormenti, representative of the Party C.E.C. in the corresponding organ of the Y.C.F., were to be seen. Sormenti utilized the C. E. C. of the Y.C.F. as a "big stick" to win his ends in the C.E.C. of the Party.

A very weak political thesis, destructive in its analysis of the past work of the Y.C.F. and with proposals for the immediate commencement of numerous new "political" tasks was presented by the representative of the Y. C. I. who, it goes without saying, had a very deficient knowledge of the situation, the strength and possibilities of the youth federation. In this thesis it was proposed to commence at once the formation of youth sections in the unions, agrarian organizations and in the Red Aid, the organization of nuclei in the army, the organization of a National Sports Federation, of a League of Youth against imperialism, and to call an early date a national convention of the Red Pioneers. It was declared imperative that the Y. C. F. commence immediately all of these tasks.

When the opposition group continued in its demands that definite stress be laid on the more important work of organization, and the trade unions, and that the anti-militarist, anti-imperialist, young peasants league and youth section of the Red Aid be considered not of immediate importance with practical rejection of the last three the "guardian of the Holy Grail" from Moscow threatened us with expulsion should we insist on carrying the points of difference to the floor of the congress. After some minor changes regarding the criticism of past work, the draft thesis was accepted. In order to prevent a split in the Federation, the opposition group agreed not to bring the question up at the congress.

The congress took place without any opposition to the line of action laid down by the presidium which was controlled by Matlin and Sormenti. Velled accusations were made against the "liquidationist", "social democratic" and "anti-Communist" tendencies, of the oppositionist comrades and by employment of true Stalinist methods, such as declaring that "foreigners" could not form part of a Central Committee, (!) the new C. C. and C. E. C. were named. Perhaps realizing that the new C. E. C. would have to work under the dictatorship of some Party or international representative and for fear of developing leadership it was decided that no General

Secretary should be named, and that all political functions should be carried out collectively by the C. E. C.

Immediately the deficiencies of the new C. E. C. were to be observed. The different theses approved at the congress were not sent to the units or even to the regional committees. All of the work of the C. E. C. fell into disorganization as no one knew where or how to begin. All the scolding of Matlin and the nearness of the "imminent" workers and peasants revolution could not get the new apparatus to function. The only work that did not become completely demoralized was the press and Pioneer work. Delegates were no longer sent to the interior to carry on direct work with the units and with the masses.

Knowing that an anti-militarist campaign would be certain to bring down a still more severe repression of the movement by the authorities, and without counting on any real mass support, this work was given not only preference by the Y. C. F. but was actually turned into the principal task of the organization. The spirit of adventure always found in the youth was appealed to, and the comrades in different parts of the country vied with one another in seeing which local could get the generals exasperated first.

No sooner had the campaign been commenced than the repression struck with full force. In a period of about two months all the leading elements of the largest urban locals were imprisoned, including the whole C. E. C. with the exception of one comrade, besides many Party and trade union leaders. About 20 foreigners

were deported from the country, five comrades (of whom four were members of the Y. C. F. and one of the C. E. C.) were exiled to the penal colony in the Pacific Ocean and the Y. C. F. of Mexico was reduced to complete impotence. The "mass" demonstrations were few, rickety and ineffective. In the midst of all this, after organizing the expulsion of the writer of these lines from the Party and the Y.C.F. for his criticism of the line in Mexico and disagreement with the general splitting policy of the Comintern abroad and greasing the slides for others, Matlin fled cowardly from Mexico, without so much as notifying the Central Executive Committee.

Expulsions Continue

At the present time the expulsion fever continues to rage full blast in the C.E.C. of the Y.C.F. which seems to be about to result in its expelling itself. It may be interesting to note that the present C.E.C. of the Y.C.F. of Mexico is composed of one alternate, named in the congress, and two comrades, both of them quite incapable of national direction and who were not elected at the congress.

There is still hope however. This lies in the reorganization of the Young Communist forces in Mexico under the banner of the International Left Opposition. When the present "Left" turn of the Comintern takes its inevitably sharp Right turn, and the same young Communist elements in Mexico (and there are many) realize the correctness of our position, we may hope for a rapid improvement of the situation. Those who have striven for the building up of the Y. C. F. of Mexico will not stand quietly by while the organization is smashed under the combined blows of the governmental reaction and the Centrist bureaucracy.

—RUSSELL BLACKWELL

The Rank and File Is Ominously Silent!

On Tuesday, May 14, at 8 p. m., at a general membership meeting of the New York district of the Young Communist League took place. I read in one of the last issues of the Militant an article about the last N. Y. "united front" May Day conference. In that article it was stated that there was hardly any discussion from the floor, etc. Now at a Y. C. L. membership meeting which is called to act on a Plan of Action given out by the N. E. C. one would think that there would be adequate discussion.

But the fact is that there was NO DISCUSSION from the rank and file members. Of course even you might not believe it, so I will explain what took place. First, Shohan, the District Organizer, reported for about an hour. When he was through, we were supposed to have 3 minutes discussion for each speaker. Well, the first was a comrade who spoke on the Young Worker in the name of the District Committee. Then a comrade on the Needle trades, who made an announcement that all the comrades should leave the meeting and go to the general needle trades fraction meet in Manhattan Lyceum where Bedacht was reporting. Then the district anti-director took 3 minutes to give some instructions about giving out leaflets to the feet. He also reported that Saturday's mobilization "was a flop". Then two more, the great unknown, John Steuben and Sam Reed each gave us a speech a piece.

After this Shohan too' the floor without asking the members whether any discussion is needed and "summed up".

We were separated into fractions, that is, needle trades, food workers, etc., and were supposed to join the T. U. U. L. as a start in the membership drive.

League Members, Wake Up!

I think it's about time the League members woke up. It has gone far enough this bureaucratic way of conducting work. Shohan in his report, speaking about the unemployment work of the Y. C. L., said: "As far as the League is concerned, it is a one hundred percent failure."

Just think, after Shohan, criticizing the rank and file, making insinuations that unit organizers have misappropriated funds

(collection boxes were given to each unit on May 1-3, and only five units had returned their boxes thus far, Shohan asked whether they used the money for movies or to pay their rent), in his whole speech he NEVER EVEN ONCE CRITICIZED THE LEADERSHIP. He didn't even bother to take a vote to approve the Plan of Action.

Now I will ask some of the older members in the N. Y. League what has happened? Have they become robots and stopped thinking? Where are Fanny Rothman, Freema Katz, Ben Harper, H. Nuaslaum, Eda Eisman, Morris, Bindler, Kucher, Mae Kuperman, Friedman, Shavelson, Slipjan (Harlem), etc.?

I will end by quoting from a speech delivered to the Third Congress of the Russian Y. C. L.: "A Communist who would dream of boasting of his Communism on the basis of the ready-made conclusions taught to him, without performing the most serious, the difficult and persistent work, without understanding the facts of which he should be extremely critical, would be a miserable Communist indeed." Let this be the guide for every Y. C. L. member.

—LEO RING

All members of the Young Communist League are invited to write articles to the Young Vanguard on the condition the Y. C. L. finds itself today. The surest way to stop the wrecking tactics of the Y.C.L. bureaucrats is to expose them before the membership.

We are sure nobody will accuse us of not taking life seriously when we say that upon reading the Daily Worker (5-17-1930) we laughed till we collapsed. That irrepressible humorist, Harrison George, writes there: "The Communist Party has nothing to hide from the workers. It publishes its opinions, its programs, its resolutions, so every worker can find out just what the Communists stand for... It is going to hold a national convention next month and being a really (emphasis in original—Ed.) democratic organization it consults its members on the Thesis drawn up by the Central Committee on the Economic and Political Situation." This fellow will be the death of us yet

In the Y. C. L.

The Plan of Action

The feeling which one experiences in the Young Communist League these days is that of a man trying to lift himself by his bootstraps. There seems to be a tremendous strain, a terrible commotion, much shouting mingled with many threats, but amidst all the fury there stands the League still tugging violently at its bootstraps. Each successive resolution appears more dismal than the preceding one. In every sphere of activity nothing but failures and defeats stare the League in the face. The membership turnover has assumed the character of a rationalized factory.

"Do More Work"

Through all the discordant noise and din, shrill and relentless, rings one penetrating strain: We lag behind, we lag behind, we continue to lag behind, we never seem able to stop lagging behind, we must not lag behind but we do lag behind, lag lag, lag behind. This strain has many variations but all have the same theme. The puny League bureaucrats, devoted disciples of Browder and Foster, are not in the least, however nonplussed. They have a remedy for everything. "You must do more work!" they thunder to the membership. And then to show that they have even heard of such a strange matter as Leninist analysis in determining the cause for failures, they add: "We must fight both the Right and Left dangers". They hope to conceal their impotence behind a screen of "theoretical" verbiage.

To be sure, the Right danger is the main danger, they say. But "there is also the so-called 'Left' danger which stands as a main barrier to be overcome in successfully combatting the main danger, the Right danger." (Resolution and Plan of Action of National Executive Committee—Young Worker, May 12, 1930). Life, it seems, is indeed most complicated. And the road in the struggle against the Right danger is most devious. With so many different varieties of social fascists, time is certain to produce new dangers. Then the alarm will have to sound, and it will be observed that we lag behind. The resolutions will have to bristle with warnings like these: There is also the so-called "Middle" Danger which stands as a main obstacle to be overcome in successfully combatting the so-called "Left" danger which stands as a main barrier to be overcome in successfully combatting the main danger, the Right danger.

The League membership must call a halt to all this idiotic jabbering and criminal phrasemongering, all of which is intended only to conceal the bankruptcy of the Stalinist leadership.

The "Plan of Action"

The so-called Plan of Action, this latest innovation with which the Steubens, the Harveys, and the Greens are attempting to cover their recent miserable failures, cannot be realized with the present false policies and opportunist regime. It will be as successful as the last membership drive which it was claimed recruited 1,100 new members. The resolution on the Plan of Action says: "Every unit must be made to function so that they can hold the gains made in new members, and not lose young workers for the League as we did during the last membership drive." And Shohan, D. O. of the N. Y. district stated at a recent membership meeting: "This drive must not be like the last drive where we recruited 200 members on paper." The adoption of such high-sounding titles as "Plan of Action" and "shock troops" cannot make the present drive any different than the last.

The members of the Y. C. L. must be alert. They must not permit themselves to be deceived. They must try to find out what is wrong, and what is all this unceasing "lagging behind" all about. They must study the viewpoint of the Left Opposition. Some are already doing this.

—GEORGE RAY