

Youth and Fascism

Otto Kuusinen
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By O. KUUSINEN

The Condition of the Youth Has Changed

COMRADES, the clearest and truest utterance on the existing war danger was made by Comrade Stalin at the last Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. At that time he also clearly and strikingly depicted the hopeless confusion, the impasse reached by the imperialist politicians, who, in spite of the experience of the last World War, which unleashed revolution in a number of countries and led to the victory of the proletariat in Russia, are nevertheless preparing to clutch at war "as a drowning man clutches at a straw". A new world war will again "unleash revolution and put in question the very existence of capitalism in a number of countries", Comrade Stalin said. But in the same speech he also expressed himself in the most vigorous fashion *against all opportunist reliance on spontaneity.*

At our Congress, Comrade Dimitroff has struck a most severe blow at reliance on spontaneity. As you will remember, comrades, his report on the fight against fascism and his reply to the discussion were from beginning to end inspired by this spirit of struggle against reliance on automatism, the spirit which demands the greatest intensification of our Bolshevik activity.

The same basic thought ran through the report of Comrade Ercoli on the tasks of the Communist International in connection with the preparations by the imperialists for a new world war. His report was so detailed and comprehensive that I have very little to add to it. My remarks in supplement to that report will deal exclusively with one sector of this struggle, namely, the struggle of youth.

I cannot, however, confine myself to the special struggle of youth against war. It goes without saying that we must organize campaigns among the youth specially on the question of war, that we must carry on specifically anti-militarist work, and the like.

The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International was held in Moscow from July 25 to August 20, 1935.

This also is important, just as it is important to organize special anti-fascist campaigns, and even special anti-fascist fighting organs. But the most important, the *fundamental*, thing is the development of a *general* militant youth movement. Whether we succeed or not in creating a revolutionary or radical youth movement of a strong mass character will be of *decisive* significance both for the fight against the war danger and the fight against fascism; and in particular it is a question of developing a broad united front movement among the youth.

The fight against fascism and war is, of course, one of the most important questions of every radical youth movement. If, however, the fight against war and fascism is made the only subject of the program of action of the youth, or if the anti-war or anti-fascist struggle of the youth is organized in a narrow, "departmental" fashion, the broadest youth masses, as experience has shown, cannot be included, cannot be set in motion. In order to achieve this a *broader youth program of action* must be drawn up.

This, for instance, has been shown by the experience gained in the work of the International Youth Committee for Struggle Against Fascism and War. This Committee has performed no mean work. But the winning of the masses proceeded very slowly as long as they confined themselves to these two questions. It was not until the International Committee took the initiative of calling a broad Youth Conference on the basis of a general program for the youth that its actions met with strong response among the masses.

How, comrades, is this circumstance to be explained? By the fact that *during the last few years the condition of the youth has radically changed*. We are here referring not only to protracted and chronic *unemployment*. *Lack of occupation* has already become a mass phenomenon among the youth. Formerly, many schools, at least the lower schools, were open to the working class youth in most of the capitalist countries. Today, the schools, and opportunities for education generally, are becoming more and more restricted for the younger members of the toiling population.

Formerly, a certain—even if slight—number of the working class youth had the opportunity of rising out of their class to something "higher", to the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, or the petty-bourgeoisie intelligentsia; in exceptional cases a young worker could become a doctor, architect or teacher. These exceptional cases were sufficient to foster reformist illusions among the greater part of the working class youth.

Today, on the contrary, whole strata of the working class youth are becoming *declassed*, that is to say, they no longer have the opportunity of rising even into the class of their fathers; they have no chance at all of finding work, or of learning a profession. These young people are sinking to the level of the *lumpenproletariat*, are falling a prey to hunger, poverty, crime and prostitution.

The bourgeoisie, however, which is unable to offer opportunities of work to a steadily increasing section of the youth, needs this youth for war purposes. The young people are being driven into barracks and compulsory labor camps.

Today, nine-tenths of the younger generation are suffering want in one form or another. *The younger generation has become a suffering, oppressed, heavily oppressed, generation*. It forms a new oppressed stratum of the people. Even the United States, a country where it is alleged that the youth has the greatest opportunities and is relatively well off, has become a country of colossal unemployment and neglect of the youth.

This circumstance has created the basis on which a very broad youth people's front can develop.

Fascism has been commissioned by the bourgeoisie to infect the neglected youth with its demagoguery, and especially with chauvinism. In fact, this situation creates objective opportunities for fascism to carry on its noxious work among the youth. But Communism also has far greater opportunities for work among the youth than formerly. The only question is whether we are capable of utilizing these opportunities.

This question cannot be answered off-hand in the affirmative.

At any rate, I have no doubt that we shall frame excellent resolutions. But we did not frame bad resolutions before either. Comrade Chemodanov has here referred to some of these resolutions on mass work among the youth. But these resolutions were never carried out.

And the resolutions themselves suffered from a certain defect: they were too general, too abstract. We must draw the lesson from this. Comrade Dimitroff has strongly stressed the fact that sectarianism frequently disguises itself under the cloak of Bolshevik theses. We are not afraid of criticizing it, and in the sphere of the youth movement we have grounds enough for criticism and self-criticism. On this occasion, however, I would like to deal with the positive experiences gained by the Communist youth movement recently in certain countries—principally in France and the United States. In part, Comrades Chemodanov and Michal, and still more Comrades Raymond, Guyot and Green, have dealt with this. However, it appears to me not unprofitable to analyze these experiences in greater detail in order that they may become the possession of the Young Communist Leagues of all countries. (I have also received instructive information from Comrade Diego in Spain. But I shall have to forego an analysis of the experiences of the Spanish comrades because I received the information too late.)

The French Experience

The fascists proposed to the masses of the French youth the creation of a "front of the younger generation". Our French comrades—Comrade Raymond and others—accepted this challenge of the fascists. But how did they do this?

Had they been mere doctrinaire propagandists, they would have rejected the very formulation of the question, declaring: there is no problem of the younger generation; there is only a class problem, the problem of the oppression of the working classes and working class youth.

But the French comrades acted differently. They said: Very well, let us discuss the problem of the present younger generation. It is an acute question, a sore question. It is a question of the poverty, oppression and desperate condition of the vast majority of the present younger generation. What is necessary is a fight against this ruthless oppression of the youth. It is absolutely essential that the youth should fight for its rights, for its cause. A front of the younger generation must be created. *But against whom?* Who is responsible for the impoverishment of the younger generation? Who is exploiting them, or throwing them out of employment onto the streets, according to his profit interests? The capitalist, above all the big capitalist. Who is oppressing and fettering the youth? Who is preventing them from leading a decent human existence? The reactionary bourgeoisie and its machinery of power. Who wants to tie the youth still more frightfully hand and foot? Who wants to suppress bloodily the fight of the youth for their rights? The tools of the reactionary bourgeoisie—the *fascists*, the people of the "Fiery Cross". Hence, these are the enemies of the youth. It is against these people that the front of the younger generation must be formed.

This is the way the French comrades put the matter.

The French fascists, on the other hand, called for a front of the younger generation against the *old* regime and against the *old* parties, including the Communist Party. The fascists raised the banner of a "new" movement and a "new" party, and believed that it would dazzle the youth by its brilliance and enable the fascists to utilize for their own fascist ends the justified hatred of the youth for the old corrupt party system.

But our French comrades declared: Against the old regime, by all means. But fascism represents the oldest and worst regime, a variety of the barbaric feudal regime carried over to modern society. What the interests of the broadest strata of the youth urgently demand is a fight against the old regime in conjunction with the Communists; this fight is in the most urgent interest of

the younger generation. But the only party consistently fighting for the abolition of the old regime, for the abolition of the domination of the possessing classes over the working classes, which has prevailed for hundreds and thousands of years, is the Communist Party.

But—the fascists objected—the Communist Party represents the interests of only *one* class, whereas we represent the interests of the entire people and the entire youth.

That is not true—our French comrades retorted—for the interests of the overwhelming majority of the people who are suffering want, because they are being exploited by a few rich parasites, are the true interests of the people. And it is the interests of all who are exploited and oppressed that the Communists are defending. The fascist murder gangs, however, seize by the throat the masses of the people who are rejecting the yoke of the parasitic finance capitalists and pretend that this is "a fight in the interests of the people".

Now, was the manner of action of our French comrades right or wrong? Comrades, if any of you should answer: "Of course, it was right", I will retort: right, but *not* "of course". For at that time, last year, when the French comrades began for the first time to approach the youth masses in this way it was not "of course" at all. On the contrary. Here, for instance, among the leaders of the Young Communist International, it appeared even to some of the best comrades as strange, doubtful, reprehensible. They shook their heads and said in astonishment: "What sort of language is this—"a front of the younger generation"? That is not our Communist language, it is a slogan borrowed from the fascists. . . .

That was, of course, a complete misunderstanding. Our French comrades only utilized the *form* of stating the matter as used by the fascists in order to give it a *truly revolutionary content*. And just because they were not afraid of using this form of stating the matter, but took up the controversy provoked by the fascists before the youth masses, they succeeded in wresting

the sword from the hand of the fascists and in turning it *against* fascism.

It was precisely this art of fencing, parrying every thrust of the fascist demagogues, that was formerly so feebly developed among our young comrades in Germany.

Our French comrades, when speaking to the youth masses, were able to give the right answer to the question: "*What must the youth fight for?*"

For the elementary material demands of the present day, or for the great ideals of the future?—this false contrast has in many countries been a constant stumbling-block in Communist agitation among the youth, with the result that our Young Communist Leagues did not come out with complete convincingness *either* for the immediate, day-to-day demands of the youth, *nor* for their great aims of the future. The false impression persisted among large numbers of the youth that the reformists, and even the Catholic priests, are more concerned about the daily needs of the youth masses than the Communists, and that the fascist demagogues are better able than the Communists to offer them prospects for an attractive and alluring future.

The French young comrades, however, realized the importance of this, and understood the art of organically combining the day-to-day demands of the youth with the revolutionary aims of the youth movement. Within the ranks both of the Socialist youth and of the Republican and Catholic youth, as well as at mass meetings of the unemployed youth, they met with an enthusiastic response when they declared:

The entire youth, which is suffering want and injustice, must rise up in a common fight! Let us fight for our rights, the *rights of youth*! We have the right to live, but even this most elementary of human rights is denied us by the ruling capitalists and speculators. We demand immediate assistance, immediate employment. We have a right to vocational training, a right to education in general. This right, too, is now being systematically

curtailed and withdrawn. We demand that immediate measures shall be taken by the government against this. We demand that the burden of the crisis shall be shifted from the backs of the toiling people to the backs of the money kings, to the backs of those who are profiting by the crisis. We, the younger generation, demand the right to a better, a happy future. We do not want to allow France to be Hitlerized. We want the dissolution of the fascist murder gangs. We want to fight for peace among the peoples. And therefore we must carry on a determined struggle in our country against the fascists and reactionary militarists who are preparing for a new world war and a criminal civil war against the French working class.

It was in this spirit that the French Young Communist League acted, and it succeeded in starting a mass united front youth movement. This action of the young comrades in France has been criticized, and criticized from the standpoint of old doctrinaire formulas. You have omitted to emphasize—it was said—that it is *impossible* under capitalism to achieve any demands for improvements in the condition of the working class youth. This is an omission from the point of view of principle, an opportunist deviation—the strict critics averred.

But the French young comrades held a different opinion, and quite rightly. They said: No, it is *possible* to achieve certain improvements in the condition of the youth, provided large masses of the people can be gotten to undertake a common and determined struggle. And it is for us to see to it that they do so; that depends first and foremost on *us*, on the energy we display, and on whether we pursue the right tactics. Inspired by this truly Bolshevik determination, the young comrades of France approached the masses of the unemployed youth and put the following before them:

Winter is approaching, comrades. You know what sufferings it will entail. Shall we endure these torments like timorous slaves? No! We cannot and will not live through the coming winter as we have lived hitherto. If you agree, we call upon you

to act immediately. Send mass deputations to the Minister of Labor at once! Send a deputation even to Geneva, to the League of Nations! Organize immediately mighty demonstrations in the streets of Paris! We young people must fight for our right to live. Only in this way can we achieve any amelioration of our condition. And we shall fight like lions. We shall show the rich bankers and the other hyenas of the crisis, the gentlemen of the Comité de Forges and their ilk, that the French youth refuse to be slaves. *Let the old world tremble, for we, the younger generation, are rising!*

By acting in this way, our young French comrades at this stage *politically defeated* fascism in the eyes of the youth masses. The fascists lost the taste for talking about "the front of the younger generation"; they retreated like dogs, their tails between their legs. (*Loud applause.*)

Last year, this "French method of fighting" fascism was still *something new*. At that time it demanded great political courage and independence on the part of our comrades. For those comrades in the leadership of the Young Communist International who at first did not understand the language of the French comrades—a language so free from the old catchwords—because they did not grasp the political meaning of this language, this case served as an important political lesson. (I called it "French lessons" at the time.) And I must say that these comrades in the leadership of the Young Communist International learnt quickly and began to support the course of the mass policy of the Communist youth of France with true Bolshevik determination and energy. And not only that, they took the initiative in inducing the Young Communist Leagues in other countries to adopt the same course.

Of course, the Young Communist International as a whole has taken only the first steps in the application of these tactics. But there can be no doubt that under the guidance of their present leaders they will advance rapidly and determinedly along this road.

The American Experience

The experiences recently gained by the Young Communist League of the U.S.A. are also highly instructive.

These matters began with the calling of a general congress of the youth organizations of the country as a result of the wide organizational initiative displayed by a fascist group, with the support of the government. The Young Communist League was faced by the question of whether it should send its representatives to this congress or not. It is not surprising that opinion within the Young Communist League should have been divided on so novel a question.

A few years earlier a question of this kind would in all probability have been settled even without discussion: any participation would have been rejected, and our Young Communist League would probably have received such a sectarian decision with self-complacency, as the best solution to a difficult question. But now this question was discussed in the Young Communist League, and it turned out that the comrades who were opposed to participating in the congress had very poor arguments to offer. "We are afraid that we are too weak to put up a stand against such powerful forces", they said.

You see, comrades, how the old sectarianism, which has so often taken the shape of exaggerated self-assertion, on this occasion, when a great practical task demanded a clear and bold decision, revealed itself as a *lack* of confidence in our own forces, in the leading role of the working class youth.

The leaders of the Young Communist League of the United States, headed by Comrade Green, brushed this faint-hearted argument aside, rolled up their sleeves and went to the congress, at which an extremely variegated group of young people from most diverse strata was assembled. Our American comrades achieved a great success at this youth congress. The agents of fascism were completely isolated, and the congress was transformed into a great united front congress of the radical youth.

And when, somewhat later, a second general youth congress was held, our young comrades already enjoyed a position of authority at it. This authoritative position was due to the confidence which they had gained by their new mass policy, and also to the fact that they had learned to approach and conduct the work in the right way.

What did they learn concretely?

First, they learned *soberly to estimate the degree of radicalization of the youth masses*, that is, to estimate it correctly, without Right under-valuations and without "Left" over-valuations.

Previously, many comrades had too simple an idea of the matter, and believed that once a radicalization of the toiling masses and an upsurge of the mass movement had begun—which was actually the case in America—it could be "stamped" without further ado a real "revolutionary" upsurge and one had only then to look up the program of the Young Communist International for the revolutionary slogans that should be issued in such a situation and the revolutionary tasks that should be undertaken.

Our American young comrades now learned that although a great process of radicalization and activation of the youth masses had indeed set in in the United States, these masses—indeed even their most active representatives—still did not understand the most ordinary Communist slogans, battle cries and demands. They did not even understand so "simple" a thing as fascism. This had first to be explained to them in a popular way. And even when they grasped that fascism is an enemy, it was found that many of them considered it quite in order when the Hearst press issued the cry, "Against Communism and Fascism!" They failed to observe that genuine American fascist agitation was being carried on under this treacherous guise. They had to be convinced in the most patient manner possible of the true state of affairs, without our own opinion being *forced on them*. Whereupon it was discovered, for instance, that many

of those who were already prepared to join with the Young Communist League in the fight against the war danger and fascism could still not be gotten to take part in street demonstrations. They were entirely unaccustomed to this method of struggle, and one had at first to join with them in other, more elementary forms of struggle, which could be regarded by the members of their organizations as their *own* forms of struggle, in order later, as their fighting spirit grew, to lead them further.

Second, our American young comrades convinced themselves that they indeed *had a lot to learn from the non-Communist masses.*

For instance, they learnt "a new language", the fresh, concrete, popular and expressive language of youth—the language which Comrade Dimitroff here demanded—in place of the old, dry, stereotyped jargon which is almost incomprehensible to the normal human mind. Comrade Green has explained how, in connection with the youth congress, they succeeded in framing the highly important "Declaration of Rights of the American Youth" in the language of youth:

"... We did all in our power to see to it that as many youth and their organizations as possible were drawn in to help formulate and finalize this document."

And he added:

"By working in this manner we did not weaken the prestige of the Y.C.L. but strengthened it; we showed large numbers of youth that the Y.C.L. had no narrow interests but that its main concern was to broaden the youth congress and make it the most effective mass movement against reaction and for the immediate needs of the youth."

In particular, the representatives of the American Young Communist League have learnt from the masses how to approach the *non-proletarian* strata of the youth correctly. Formerly, many members of the Young Communist League looked down, for

instance, on the student youth, and thereby, of course, made it difficult to set up closer contacts with them. This was also an expression of sectarianism and had to be eliminated from the ranks of the Communist youth movement. If the representatives of the Young Communist League of the United States had not known how to approach the student youth in a comradely fashion, it would have been impossible for them to have developed their great united front actions among the students, the most important of which was the big students' strike against war and fascism on April 12, 1935, in which 184,000 students took part.

Third, the American young comrades have also learned to overcome their former inflexibility in tactics and to apply *elastic tactics.*

Comrade Green has quoted two characteristic examples of this. The first example is that the religious members of the congress, who were at first particularly skeptical of the possibility of a united front with the Communists, on Sunday morning were given the opportunity of the private enjoyment of divine service. The second example is that the Roosevelt project for making provision for the youth by an appropriation of \$50,000,000 for the purpose of immediate assistance to the youth, on the initiative of our comrades was not labeled demagogic, but rather credited as a *concession* which the government was obliged to make in view of the growing united front movement. At the same time, the leaders of the youth united front exposed the utter inadequacy of this measure and also pointed out how the government's plan threatened to impair the condition of *certain* sections of the youth. Comrade Green was quite right when he summarized the results of these tactics in the following terms:

"Thus it turns this project of Roosevelt from a weapon against the Youth Congress into an instrument for mobilizing the youth for increased government aid."

Here you see the same result as in France: you see how the

sword was wrested from the hand of the enemy and turned against him.

Fourth, the comrades of the Young Communist League of the United States have learned that it is essential to enter the big youth organizations led by the bourgeoisie. And not only that, they have also learned how to work in these organizations.

Formerly, such bourgeois youth organizations were simply counted by the Young Communists among the enemy organizations, and their millions of members were without more ado regarded as "enemies".

The fact was ignored that in the United States—and not only there—the great majority of the toiling youth belong to such organizations. You must not think that the majority of the youth are unorganized. No, in many countries the majority are organized, and not only in the army, not only in the schools—they too are bourgeois organizations—but directly in these bourgeois youth organizations. But even after we really began to say that we must work within the ranks of these organizations, this work was understood in an entirely sectarian way as so-called "destructive work". Now, "destructive work" in this sphere was so little in place, that it is not to be regretted that, as was mostly the case, it simply remained on paper.

The American young comrades are speaking from experience when they say today that we must work in these mass organizations not with the purpose of destroying or weakening them, but to work "to transform them from centers of bourgeois influence into centers of united front struggle, into centers of proletarian influence". The mass of the youth regard these organizations as their own, and only by earnestly working to represent the needs and interests of the youth through these organizations can we extend our influence among the masses.

In these organizations our American young comrades have discovered a large number of functionaries and cadres who are prepared to fight side by side with the Communists against reaction, and in the course of not quite a year the Young Com-

munist League in the United States has succeeded in creating 175 fractions in these mass organizations. (*Applause.*)

Comrades, these are only a few—not all—of the positive experiences gained by the Young Communist League of the United States in the course of the work recently carried on by our American young comrades.

Work in Bourgeois Youth Organizations

Is the work which the Young Communist League of the U.S.A. has initiated so successfully within the ranks of the bourgeois mass organizations possible and necessary only in the United States?

Of course not. It is equally possible in many other countries, if not in the same forms. In Great Britain, our comrades have begun something similar, although in different forms. Or, more exactly, they are only just beginning; they are considerably belated. In the Scandinavian countries, our comrades are so late in starting that they even still have not seriously set themselves this task.

Naturally, in the fascist countries this work has to be carried on differently from the way it is carried on under legal conditions. Comrade Dimitroff has very excellently shown you this in his brilliant comparison with the Trojan horse.

But these tactics must be applied not only in the fascist countries, but also in many colonial countries, for instance, in China. You know that our Chinese young comrades in the Soviet regions have performed truly legendary deeds of heroism. In the regions where fighting is going on they understand in a masterly fashion also how to pursue the tactics characterized by the comparison with the Trojan horse. But in the White regions, where the Kuomintang terror is raging, it is precisely in these tactics that they are weak. The heroism of our young Chinese comrades is testified to by the prominent French writer, André Malraux, who went to China and there recorded in his descriptions the

most prominent examples of the deeds of our Chinese young comrades. In view of such heroism one might have thought that the Chinese comrades would not have found it difficult to rid themselves of the relics of sectarianism in all the White regions suffering from the terror. But it appears that this task is a difficult one even for our Chinese comrades. They must therefore learn the tactics characterized by the comparison with the Trojan horse and by means of these tactics endeavor to penetrate into the broad mass organizations. And they can do it. They are talented people. (Applause.)

In other colonies, too, particularly in India, a great deal, in my opinion, can be achieved by working in the bourgeois mass youth organizations.

This is a tremendously important task, particularly in the imperialist countries, from the standpoint of the fight against war. How can we speak at all of preparing the working classes to fight war in the event of its outbreak, if we do not work in these big bourgeois mass youth organizations? The major part of the young members of the toiling people belong to these mass organizations, yet in most countries we are taking no serious measures to establish contacts with the youth in order to explain to them the impending danger.

Is this a Bolshevik way of preparing for the event of war?

Even the non-fascist leaders of these mass organizations, even those who in "times of peace" carry on pacifist propaganda, the moment the ruling bourgeoisie of the country starts a war, in nine cases out of ten will, in one form or another, place themselves at the disposal and practically at the service of those conducting the war. The mass of the young members will be caught by surprise and will be dragged into the war by deceit, if they are not prepared beforehand for all this by their connections with the Communists, and if the Communists do nothing in advance except prate about "mass work".

The Young Communist Leagues

But how can the proletariat be prepared for the event of an imperialist war as long as our Young Communist Leagues are as weak as they are today? Unless there are strong, active and revolutionary organizations of the working class youth, organically connected with the largest youth organizations of the country, the proletariat, both in the fight against war and in the fight against fascism, will be like a one-armed soldier.

From the fact that strong revolutionary organizations are necessary, it by no means follows that our Young Communist Leagues must accept only such new members who are already revolutionary, already Communist, already fully capable of action. No. *The doors of our youth organizations must be thrown wide open!* Wherever these organizations are legal they must be thrown wide open to all young men and women as long as they sincerely sympathize with Communism and want to study Communism.

The whole life of the Communist youth organizations must be so refashioned that new members who are not yet Communist and who are not yet accustomed to Communist discipline and activity should feel at home in the Young Communist League, come to us willingly, experience a vivid interest in the life of our organizations and find in the latter the opportunity of developing step by step into Communists.

Fluctuation of membership has been particularly great in our youth organizations. What is this fluctuation? *It is a criticism of our sectarianism by the sympathizing masses!* (Applause.) As a rule, this sectarianism is especially expressed in the fact that excessive demands are immediately made of new members in the matter of organization and discipline, demands they cannot fulfil. Furthermore, their work is badly organized, is mostly of a technical nature, and so tedious as to be calculated to kill the most lively interest. If, however, a new member is unable to fulfil the demands made of him, he is very often ruthlessly criti-

cized by our youth functionaries, or perhaps even expelled. I have information from Spain to the effect that there the demands in respect of work are even greater in the youth organizations than in the Communist Party. And the fluctuation is correspondingly great. This is one—if not the only, at least one of the worst—forms of copying the Party on the part of the youth organizations, copying which has here been so rightly criticized by Comrade Dimitroff.

In earlier years one could often hear hair-splitting arguments among our young comrades on the following scholastic alternative: should our youth organizations be *educational* organizations or *fighting* organizations? A fight was even waged against the "opportunist deviation" that was allegedly expressed in regarding the youth organizations as educational organizations. Naturally, if education is taken as meaning only schooling by means of books, theses, lectures, etc., this opinion is undoubtedly an opportunist one. But how did Lenin put the question? At the Third Congress of the Russian Young Communist League, held in October, 1920, he said the following:

"The task of the Young Communist League is to organize its practical activities in such a way that, in learning, organizing, uniting and fighting, it shall train its members and all those who look upon it as their leader, train them to become Communists."

The Central Task of the Young Communist International

The central task of the Young Communist International now is to *establish unity of the youth movement against fascism, war and capitalist oppression*. This central task has been clearly and definitely set forth by Comrade Georgi Dimitroff in his report and in the resolution on the second point of the agenda, and was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by the delegation from the Communist youth to our World Congress. The line of the Young Communist International for the next immediate period of the struggle has been thereby laid down.

The next Congress of the Young Communist International must, on the basis of past experience, concretize and explain this great central task of the Communist youth for each country, and embody it in individual, immediate practical tasks. There is no need for me to anticipate this work of the Congress of the Y.C.I. here. I only want to point out the decisive and immediate importance of this question for all countries of the capitalist world, both for the youth movement and for the fight of the toilers against fascism, war and the capitalist offensive.

As a rule, the organizations of the *Socialist youth* are hedged off and isolated no less than the Young Communist Leagues. They are today for the most part half-dormant educational organizations without any serious value as factors in the proletarian class struggle. But by means of close contact with the Communist youth they could be aroused to new life and fresh activity.

An amalgamation of forces and permanent unity of action by the Young Socialist Leagues and the Young Communist Leagues would undoubtedly result in a vigorous influx of the working class youth into both these organizations. Together they would constitute a *leading force* in the mass youth movement of their country, especially in the movement against fascism, which is threatening to annihilate both the Communist youth and the Socialist youth, and all progressive youth organizations.

That is why Comrade Dimitroff called upon the youth to form an *Anti-Fascist Association* of the Young Communist and Young Socialist Leagues on the platform of the class struggle. This appeal of Comrade Dimitroff is certainly calculated to arouse a very strong response among the Socialist youth.

It is the duty of the Communist youth, on their part, to do all they can to make it easy for the Socialist youth organizations to accept this proposal. This will help the youth movement to make a great stride forward.

But this international task in no way implies that in certain countries one cannot and should not go further. If the Communist International today has placed on the order of the day even

the question of uniting the Parties, it is obvious that the possibility of a union of the Socialist and Communist youth organizations in a number of countries is all the greater.

The Young Communist League of France has acted as a pioneer in this question, too; it has boldly and openly taken the initiative and has approached the Young Socialist League with a platform of unity which has met with warm response among the Socialist youth. This question is already an immediate one in Spain also. It may in the very near future become immediate in many other countries, such as Austria, Belgium and the U.S.A.

In the Young Socialist International a Left wing has already formed which is fighting for a united front and which is coming closer to the revolutionary position. It cannot be otherwise: on the eve of great mass struggles, the best forces, the most militant forces of the working class youth, leave the camp of reformism for the camp of the proletarian revolution. And this is true not only of the forces of the working class youth, but also of the youth of other toiling classes, the student youth, and so on. They are placing fresh, militant forces at the disposal of the active army of the fight for social emancipation.

We are already observing this in all those countries where the Communists alone have been able to foster in the right way the radicalization of the youth in the ranks of the bourgeois mass organizations.

Hence the far-reaching and immediate significance of the second task of the youth as outlined by Comrade Dimitroff, the task of

"... uniting the forces of all non-fascist mass youth organizations, including youth organizations of the trade unions, cooperatives, etc., on the basis of the broadest united front, even to the formation of various kinds of *common organizations* for the struggle against fascism, against the unprecedented manner in which the youth is being stripped of every right, against the militarization of the youth, and for the economic and cultural rights of the youth generation."

Comrades, this is the true path, this is the line of the Communist youth movement.

For Freedom and the Ideals of Youth

In the international movement for a united youth front new slogans have, as you know, recently come into use—new slogans which basically are rather old slogans: the slogan of freedom, the slogan of peace, and the slogan of the fight for democracy. It is therefore only natural that doubts should have arisen on this question in the minds of many of our comrades. For they know very well that the slogans we support must stand the test of criticism on the lines of Bolshevik principles—and it cannot be otherwise.

But the comrades who have these doubts fail to realize that times have changed, that slogans are not petrified things, but that their living content changes in accordance with time and circumstance. The slogan of freedom was at one time a revolutionary slogan in the bourgeois revolution, it then became a reformist slogan, and finally, still later, a counter-revolutionary slogan. In Germany, for instance, in 1928-32, when the Social-Democrats were in the government and issued the slogan "Against Dictatorship from the Right and the Left, for Freedom", this was a counter-revolutionary slogan of the Social-Democratic government. But today, the slogan of freedom, if it is advanced as a slogan in the fight not *against* the Communists, but in a united front *together with the Communists* against fascism, naturally acquires an entirely different content. These slogans of the people's front are, of course, vague, and it is our duty to make them clear. We must put the question before the masses clearly: *freedom for which classes?* Otherwise, these slogans may result in clouding the class-consciousness of the proletariat and its allies.

Hence the question must be made clear, and it is unwise simply to reject such slogans. These old slogans must rather be

given a new revolutionary content. Lenin said: "*Freedom, it need hardly be said, is a very, very important slogan for every revolution, be it socialist or democratic.*"

In accordance with the new "French manner of speaking", in the youth united front movement they have also begun to speak of the *ideals* of youth. Perhaps this is idealism, and must be rejected? No, the fact of the matter is that there are reactionary ideals and revolutionary ideals. The former must be rejected and the latter prized. The *Soviet ideals* are materialist, Communist ideals. And these ideals we must, of course, make widely known to, and inculcate in, the widest masses of the youth.

Facts show what tremendous prestige the Soviet Union enjoys, particularly among the youth of the capitalist countries. But how weak we are in popularizing the achievements of the Soviet Union! How weak we are when it is a question of making known the whole glorious future that faces Soviet youth! This is one of the most important political tasks of the youth movement.

I have before me a speech made by a Soviet girl who finished high school last spring. I will read you certain passages depicting the position of Soviet youth. This young comrade says:

"The doors to a joyful and creative life stand widely and hospitably open before us.

"Engineers, turners, tractor-drivers, agronomists, writers, chemists, electrical engineers—all are needed by my young and glorious country.

"Yes, Mayakovsky was right: 'Life is good, and it is good to live' in such a splendid era and in our splendid country. Boys and girls of our age abroad have never known such glorious, sunny, joyful times, such as we are experiencing today.

"... This opportunity for joyful, cheerful and thorough study was won for us by our parents, by our brothers in the October fighting, under the leadership of our great Communist Party.

"... Among us there are not only future engineers, technicians, chemists, agronomists, Red Army commanders, airmen and tank-operators, among us there are also writers, poets, composers and sculptors, among us there are volley-ball players, chess players and fine athletes!

"... We are the young masters of our Soviet land! A tremendous task confronts us, the task of conquering time and space.

"We want to live long, we must live long, and we shall live long, because Lenin has set us the task of building the Communist society. He said that it is the youth that is destined to build the Communist society.

"... Yes, we shall learn to know, to master, to open up the Arctic pole and the blue firmament. When our country commands us to be heroes, every one of us will become a hero.

"... Heroism in our country is no senseless chase after fame: our heroism is in the serious day-to-day struggle and work." (*Loud applause.*)

Comrades, if things like this were translated into the language of other countries, using the fresh language of youth, it would perhaps bring greater political benefit to our revolutionary agitation than by publishing lifeless statistical tables.

Comrades, you will see from the positive examples I have mentioned here, taken from our youth movement, that in certain countries the Communist youth has already taken the first decisive steps to learn "to swim in the stormy sea of the class struggle", as Comrade Georgi Dimitroff expressed it.

We at this Congress are all inspired by the firm conviction that the new tactical orientation that Comrade Dimitroff outlined with such power of conviction will help us to achieve really great successes in every sphere of our world movement, and not least in our youth movement.

But, comrades, one thing is certain, namely, that *this will not take place automatically*. Above all, it is absolutely essential that the Communist Parties should give the youth movement constant and solicitous aid, much more effective aid and leadership than hitherto. I address this demand not to all the Communist Parties, but to most of them. Why? The young comrades of France and the United States tell us that they have nothing to complain of, that the Parties in those countries really help them. Comrade Raymond said: "Formerly we helped the Party, now the Party helps us." The successes gained by our youth through

its own efforts have also given the Party leadership a better understanding of the role and needs of the Young Communist League.

But *all Communist Parties*, all leaders of the Communist Parties must understand once for all that the youth movement is the *heart* of the movement for social emancipation. Our youth, our hopes, are growing. But they would grow ten times faster if the Party leadership earnestly helped the Young Communist Leagues and if they assigned really capable forces to assist the youth. Some leaders of our youth movement have during the past few years grown to the stature of real youth leaders. But it will not do for every functionary of a Young Communist League who has proved himself to be a capable worker in the youth movement to be immediately taken away from this work by the leadership of the Party, as is now often the case.

Of course, the Young Communist League is among other things a school of cadres for the Party. But a school that is robbed of every capable teacher and leader is of no value. (*Stormy applause.*)

Comrades, *the second imperialist world war is approaching*. Preparations are being made for the most criminal of all criminal wars—a counter-revolutionary imperialist attack on the Soviet country, the fatherland of the workers of all countries.

Well, we know that this war—as Comrade Stalin said—will be a most dangerous war for the bourgeoisie. But whom the gods would destroy, they first make blind.

The ruling bourgeoisie is steering towards a most dangerous military adventure. In many countries it has already selected stone-blind and insane adventurers as “leaders”, and has turned over the government to their hands.

Perhaps the German bourgeoisie does not deserve better leaders, but the world must be protected against the frenzy of such leaders.

The Japanese military leaders are “apostles of peace” (as General Araki called himself and his accomplices) not less dan-

gerous to the common weal. In Poland, too, it is not political wisdom that stands at the helm of government; and British imperialism, insatiable in its lust for conquest, is prepared to support, directly or indirectly, any adventurist government in a war against the Soviet country. They are all from various ends and corners driving the world into a new massacre of the peoples. Hence the menace of war.

Well, all this does not frighten us. But it demands an earnest and energetic mobilization of the toiling population for the purpose of resisting, for combatting the war preparations of the bourgeoisie; it demands that the millions of members of the younger generation must be summoned for the united front.

How else can we resist the imperialist warmongers?

We want to attack our class enemies in the rear, when they start the war against the Soviet Union. But how can we do so if the majority of the toiling youth follow not us, but, for instance, the Catholic priests or the liberal chameleons?

We often repeat the slogan of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie. In itself, the slogan is a good one, but it becomes an empty and dangerous phrase if we do nothing serious in advance to create a united youth front. (*Loud applause.*)

We need a revolutionary youth movement at least ten times as broad as our Parties, and a united youth front hundreds of times broader still. That this is entirely possible in many countries is shown by the achievements of our French and American young comrades.

Only if we undertake and press this work everywhere with the greatest possible energy, only if we achieve really important successes in this work, shall we be able to say that we are preparing the masses in a Bolshevik way against the event of an imperialist war.

We also invite the pacifist youth organizations to join the united front. Nevertheless, we must continually remind the youth what Lenin taught us:

"You will be given a gun. Take it and learn well the art of war. This is necessary for the proletarians, not in order to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries . . . but in order to fight against the bourgeoisie of your own country, in order to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, not by means of good intentions, but by a victory over the bourgeoisie and by disarming them."

If our Parties and our youth carry on the fight against war in this spirit, there can be no doubt that in a number of countries the counter-revolutionary imperialist war will lead to revolution, and that by the end of this world war many a Goering will present as pitiful a picture as van der Lubbe did in Leipzig. (Loud applause.)

Long live the Bolshevik youth!

Long live the glorious Soviet fatherland!

Long live the great leader of the world proletariat—Stalin!

(Loud and prolonged applause. All stand amidst cries of "Red Front!" "Hurrah!" and "Banzai!" The "Junge Garde", "Carmagnole" and other revolutionary songs are sung.)

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