TWELVE YEARS OF THE Y. C. L.

By GIL GREEN

On a little Connecticut farm, buried away from the prying eyes of the federal police, on April 22nd, 1922, was held the First Convention of the then illegal Young Communist League. This was followed on May 13th, 1932 with an "open" convention held in the city of New York. This convention decided because of the illegal conditions to name its organization the Young Workers League of America (in 1929 changed back to Young Communist League, U. S. A.).

Both of the above gatherings severed all remaining organizational ties with the Socialist International and definitely accepted the program and decisions of the Young Communist International which had been founded in 1919. But the road to Leninism was not an overnight journey. Nor was this accidental. The past weighed heavily on the shoulders of the new organization. It was impossible for it, with a twinkle of the eye, to throw overboard all the reformist rubbish accumulated for generations.

This, of course, was not alone true of the Youth movement. It was the same in the Party. The first program, manifesto and constitution of the League showed the extent of the confusion which existed in both the Party and League on basic questions of Leninist theory and practice.

Confusion On Program

1. The Negro question was seen as a race question. The special oppression of a whole nation of people who live under conditions of peonage in the South was completely ignored. Nothing was said of their right to the land which they have tilled for generations, and of their right to govern themselves as they see fit in the Black Belt where they constitute a majority of the population. Nothing was even said of the need for combatting the vicious ideas of white-supremacy (white-chauvinism) in the working class and remnants of these ideas in our League. Not until 1929, and only with the help of the Communist International, did our Party and League arrive at clarity on this important question.

2. The program failed to mention the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat —Soviet Power. It failed to understand the relationship of the to the other oppressed classes. It spoke of workers' rule as "a government functioning thru the power of the proletariat to the exclusion of all other classes." (Our emphasis). This conception is contrary to Leninism which defines Soviet Power as the rule of the proletariat carried thru by an alliance with other oppressed classes.

3. It failed to understand the relationship between the Party and League. The League is organizationally independent but politically subordinate to the Party. Instead of this position the program merely "pledged cooperation and support" to the Party.

Such a stand was understandable prior to the formation of the Communist International, at a time when the labor movement in most countries of the world was saturated with reformism. It was wrong however, for the post war period, as with the formation of the Communist International the proletariat had established its revolutionary class party.

Vanguardist Mistakes

The root of the above error is to be found in the wrong idea that the youth as a group are more revolutionary than the adult movement. This was stated in as many words in an article by the National Secretary of the League, O. Carlson (now an expelled renegade). He said, "There can be no question in my mind as to the truthfulness of the statement that the Young Communists are the vanguard of the revolutionary movement just as the Communists are the vanguard of the proletariat.

It is this vanguardist conception of the role of the youth which was greatly responsible for narrow sectarianism of the youth movement and the tendency to turn the League into a young Communist Party instead of a broader mass organization than the Party.

4. The organizational structure of the League was completely based on old reformist lines. Leninist organizational principles are based on what is called democratic centralism. This means the greatest democracy and initiative for the membership and lower bodies with strong centralized leadership and firm discipline.

The first constitution ignored democratic-centralism, it did not establish the Bolshevik principle of factory units as the basic form of organization. On the contrary, it established a system of language branches which divided the League into dozens of nationalities and made centralized leadership, discipline and work at the shops nigh impossible. The reconstruction of the League on the basis of shop and street units and the abolition of the language branches was not undertaken until 1925 26.

The above errors are only a few of the most important of those made in the first programe and only indicate the great ideological immaturity of the whole Communist movement of that period.

Factional Situation

The fact that the Party and League was composed in the main of foreign born workers, had little or no connections with basic American masses still carried over much of the reformist baggage of the Socialist Party and general labor movement, all helped create a situation of continuous unprincipaled inner Party and League factional struggles. These in turn only further increased the isolation of the Party and League from the masses.

The factional groupings, because of their isolation from the basic masses, failed to see the growing awakening of the American workers. This was especially true of the Lovestone leadership, which became so impressed with the superficial surface features of so-called American prosperity that they failed to see the inner-contradictions which were with increasing speed leading to a new gigantic smash-up—a new economic crisis.

It is obvious, that only the purging of the Party and League of the Lovestone and Trotzky renegades (1929) made possible unification of the revolutionary movement and its preparation to meet the growing struggles. The economic crisis when it broke in October 1929 with the force of a volcano smashed to bits all the pet theories of the renegades, and proved the correctness of the position of the Communist International and our Party.

Since then our League has been working on the Leninist line of the Young Communist International. It has fought to break down the sectarian isolation of the League from the masses of American youth, to lead their growing radicalization along the path of theoverthrow of American Imperialism. This fight has not been an easy one. Only to the extent that we were successful in smashing the concrete expressions of opportunism, did we succeed in building the influence and organizational strength of our League.

League Has Many Accomplishments

Our League is not yet a mass organization. It has not yet won the fight with sectarianism. But never the-less it has in the twelve years of its existence accomplished much of which it can be justly proud. It alone in the last twelve years has unflinchingly stood out among the youth leading their fight against hunger and war and for Soviet Power. It has participated in hundreds of strike struggles, always being in the front ranks in the fight against the police and company thugs. It has mobilized tens of thousands of youth for unemployment insurance and immediate relief.

It has splendid revolutionary traditions of struggle against capitalist militarism, exemplified by the cases of Crouch and Trumbull. It has turned jingoistic Decoration Day into an historic National Youth Day in the struggle against imperialist war and for the defense of the Soviet Union. It has penetrated the heart of the lynch-ridden South—the Black Belt, and built a Sharecroppers Union with one-third of its 6,000 members to be found in 200 youth section. It alone of all youth organizations has fought for Negro rights, against lynching and discrimination. It has produced its own working class youth heroes who have not faltered even when giving the supreme sacrifice (Joe York, Harry Simms, Ronald Edwards, etc).

From loosely scattered connections in some 42 groups our League has grown to an organization of about 500 branches and a membership of 6,000. From an organization predominantly foreign-born our League today is in its overwhelming majority native born. From no more than a handful of Negro youth our League today has at least 10% of its membership of Negro youth. From an organization completely isolated from industrial youth our League today has 40 shop nuclei and growing ties in the basic industries.

Our League has also arrived at greater ideological clarity and is beginning to master and apply in practice the teachings of our great leaders, Marx, Lenin and Stalin. Our League is completely united behind the Communist Party and its leadership and behind our world organization the glorious Communist International.

On this 12th Anniversary of our Young Communist League, let us look back at our past critically and yet proudly. Let us from our shortcomings and mistakes draw the necessary lesson and from our achievements the necessary inspiration to intensify all of our mass work.

Victory Will Be Ours

The first twelve years of our existence show us the path. We are stronger. The enemy is weaker. We have won our spurs as a fighting organization. We feel more confident day by day. Despite all shortcomings, despite hardships and terror, we are invincible. Victory will be ours.

Let us with renewed energy and courage forge the way. Let us make National Youth Day 1934 an historic day of the American working class youth. Let us march double-quick time to our 7th National Convention and from that to the winning of the majority of the working class youth and Soviet Power.

Jim Crow

Gil Green

National Secretary of the Young Communist League, U. S. A.

Build Oppositions In Reformist A.F.L. Unions to Win Youth

(Continued from Page 5)

such as youth sections, clubs, sports, or any other form that will unite the youth in struggle for their demands.

The organization and building of functioning League fractions within the AF of L is an indespensible task of the line of the League within the general opposition is to be carried out inside of the local. This is where the greatest weakness is shown in the activity of the YCL in New York District.

The YCL members with the assistance and guidance of the Party, within the AF of L unions realizing independent activity and bringing forward the campaigns of the YCL will be able to carry on mass recruitment of young workers into the YCL.