

VIEWS and REVIEWS

by

Gil Green

(National Secretary, Y.C.L.)



THE splendid victory of the left-wing forces in the recent Spanish elections will serve to encourage and further the movement for unity throughout the world. Here is another example of how a united working class can rally to its banner all sections of the exploited masses and defeat the forces of reaction.

But Spain has a specific lesson for the working class youth movement of this country. The Spanish Socialist and Communist youth have been working together in close harmony for more than a year. They fought side by side on the barricades of Asturias. They jointly led powerful strike actions. In the course of the struggle they learned to respect each other as class brothers—as class comrades. Today they are completing their plans for merger, for the building of a united league of working class youth.

In the United States the trend of thought among the Socialist youth is also to the left. This is a most important factor working towards our future unity. But while we recognize and greet this leftward tendency, we must also point out that some Socialist youth in this country are using revolutionary phraseology to cover-up a continuation of old reformist policies and practices. This is especially true in regard to the question of the united front.

Like children who put on paper hats and imagine they're great soldiers, there are some "leaders" in the Young Peoples' Socialist League, who by using revolutionary words forget themselves and imagine they are great revolutionists.

These people reject the united front with the Communist youth, because they say we are not r-r-revolutionary enough for them. The Young Communist International to them has become a "reformist" international.

But they themselves do not believe this. In the December issue of the "Young Socialist Review," Ernest Erber, the National Chairman of the YPSL, has an article dealing with the recent Copenhagen Congress of the Socialist Youth International. In this article Comrade Erber admits that: "Measured by the criterion a revolutionary would apply, the Socialist Youth International is not an international." Furthermore, he points out that the most important left organizations of Socialist youth are for the united front with the Communists and are working together with the Communist youth. Also, he admits that it is precisely those sections of the Socialist Youth International which are revolutionary in character that are approaching ever closer to the Young Communist International. Referring to the Spanish Socialist youth, he wrote:

"Considering the results of the Copenhagen Congress and the fact that the Spaniards were not represented there, but had sent fraternal delegates to the congress of the Young Communist International at Moscow, one can also be certain that the Spaniards have broken with the Socialist Youth International."

And further he wrote:

"This loss to the left in the Socialist Youth International is tragic as the Spanish section was not only thoroughly revolutionary in sentiment, but strong numerically. At the left wing conference they reported a membership of 58,900 of which 20,000 are in prison."

We hope Comrade Erber will ponder over his article. Let him ask himself, how it is that the Spanish section which in its own words is "thoroughly revolutionary" has broken with the Socialist Youth International but was represented at the Congress of the Young Communist International. Is it because the YCI is no longer revolutionary or is it for the very opposite reason?

IT IS time Comrade Erber drew some conclusions from his own facts. It is time he realized that the American YPSL should follow in the footsteps of its brother leagues in Spain, France, Austria and Latvia and join hands with the YCI for united action and later for organic unity.

But these are not the conclusions drawn. Is it because the YPSL in America feels so strong? The same issue of the Young Socialist Review answers this question for us in no uncertain terms. It says in a leading editorial referring to the YPSL situation:

"Our League now stands in a peculiar position. We are not stronger in membership than we were a year ago. We are not much more active."

Really! This is quite an admission! And we can say, without any desire to gloat over the situation in the Young Peoples' Socialist League, that the above quotation is only half the story. The YPSL has been steadily declining in membership for the past two years. At the recent New York City Convention of the YPSL, the City Secretary, reporting another drop in membership, stated that the members were "unresponsive" and "cynical." No wonder!

It is time the comrades of the YPSL drew conclusions from all this.

Some of the leading comrades of the YPSL have sarcastically referred to our proposal for organic unity as a "suicide pact." Well, we don't like to say this, but it seems to us they're doing a pretty good job all by themselves.

UNITY will not mean suicide but life and growth. The Student League for Industrial Democracy began to grow in size and influence when it accepted the united front. The merger on the student field also did not result in "suicide," but in a more powerful organization and movement than ever before. The united front in Spain and the agreement to merge also did not result in "suicide," but in the great victory of the Spanish toilers over reaction.

This is the lesson to be drawn by the members of the YPSL, and the sooner the better. Now is the time to discard all paper hats and false pretenses. Now is the time to remember the simple but profound phrase of Karl Marx, "Shouting and doing are irreconcilable opposites."