

# 18<sup>th</sup> International Communist Seminar

**“The youth – The situation of the youth, the responsibility of the Communists Parties vis-à-vis the youth, the work of the communists among the youth, and the incorporation of the new generations in the Communist Parties”**

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## General conclusions

### **1 THE SITUATION OF THE YOUTH IN THE CAPITALIST WORLD**

In its large majority, the youth comes from the working classes. It is also directly member of the working classes in case of young workers, or destined to join the working classes (upon graduation from school or college).

The world over, the youth is one of the very first victims of the capitalist system. This system in crisis and degradation has no future to offer them, no more than to the workers in general.

The youth also constitutes a major target for the bourgeoisie. The latter continuously tries to influence the values and hopes of the youth in order to divert them from organized political struggle and class struggle. The bourgeoisie certainly does not want the youth to become conscious of the common class interests that link them to the workers as a whole.

While the youth is suffering numerous attacks, a large part of it is very present on the front of resistance, while another part rests on a position of contradiction with class struggle. There is a permanent struggle to orient the youth either towards the working class or towards the bourgeoisie.

#### **1.1. THE WORKING YOUTH AS FIRST VICTIMS OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS**

The young workers are the first to pay for a crisis they are not responsible of.

The bourgeoisie uses the youth as a very cheap and ultra-flexible reserve labor force. Upon graduation, many youth remain jobless or are integrated in the job market as interim workers or with contracts that are of short duration and/or part-time.

They are the first to lose their job and join the huge ranks of jobless. This constitutes an unbelievable waste of productive force and of human potential. Like the entire working class, the young workers are sacrificed on the altar of profit. The fundamental contradictions of capitalism are expressed, among other things, in the following absurdity: the youth experience ever more problems to find a stable job, while retirement age is being postponed from 60 to 65 years, or even from 65 to 67 and up to 70 years, implementing the reactionary plans of the US, the European Union, the IMF and other imperialist forces.

This job insecurity renders the youth fragile and prevents them from emancipating themselves from the family nucleus and build their own independent and decent lives. This situation also renders the incorporation of the youth in the organized working class

movement more difficult, and makes the transfer of traditions of struggle and organisation more complicated.

Sacrificing the youth in this way is not without consequences for many among them. Many young people end up in delinquency, victims of an ever more brutal system of repression. This is not only the result of poverty and the inability to escape from it, but it is also -- as explained below -- the consequence of the bourgeoisie's ideological offensive in the field of morality.

Young jobless workers are also the first to be sent as cannon fodder to the dirty wars of imperialism.

### **1.2. THE SCHOOL AND STUDENT YOUTH UNDER ATTACK FROM ALL SIDES...**

The school and student youth are not spared either. Plans for rationalization, privatization and austerity appear throughout the world of education.

In most countries, study costs are ever increasing, making access to education ever more troublesome for working class families.

Implementing the employers' directives, governments, whether conservative or social-democratic, privatize more and more education and research institutes, in secondary, higher and university education. This happens particularly through Public-Private Partnerships or the direct intervention of big capitalist enterprises in the management of education and research.

Throughout the capitalist world, education is acutely becoming more elitist, "categorized" and hierarchical. This phenomenon is mainly developing through an ever fiercer competition between education institutions, growing under-funding of public education and commercialization of education.

This results in the increasing inequality among schools and universities, the exclusion of an important section of the youth from education and the worsening of class-based obstacles to access to education. This generates a contemporary form of illiteracy.

Young workers with a diploma are increasingly either unemployed or doing jobs for which they are overqualified.

### **1.3. IN THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES**

In Third World countries, the youth often comprise the vast majority of the population.

Young people from underdeveloped countries have long suffered the worst economic and social conditions in the world. In the new conditions generated by the crisis, the youth more than ever suffer extreme conditions of deprivation, exploitation and oppression.

The school and university population is decreasing. Reactionary states are nor able to further develop the public education system neither to give workers' and peasants' children the opportunity to attend school and higher education.

Often, poor families want their school-aged children to go to work and increase family income. But jobs become scarce, both in the normal and the informal sector of the economy.

### **1.4. THE IDEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL MANIPULATION OF THE YOUTH**

Since the overthrow of socialism in Europe and the USSR, the bourgeoisie has reinforced its ideological offensive on the youth, using the whole battery of weapons at

its disposal: exploitation and intimidation at the work place, at school and in university, mass media, video games, certain commercialized types of sports and culture, repression, drugs, militarism, religious obscurantism,...

The youth are specifically targeted by a strong ideological campaign aimed to manipulate them and to make them experience a feeling of powerlessness (« nothing will ever change, the ruling classes are too strong »). The embryonic radicalism that characterizes the young age groups has to be suppressed.

At school, in university, in many courses and books, the capitalist system is promoted as unchangeable and history is revised by the spread of anticommunist lies. The aim is to instill in the youth the idea that there is no alternative and to hide that the only possible solution lies in the liberation from the yoke of imperialism and in socialism.

The bourgeoisie also criminalizes organizations, such as KSM (Communist Youth of the Czech Republic), that maintain and develop the common communist heritage among the youth.

It promotes individualism, "entrepreneurship" - against collectivism, solidarity, organisation and collective struggle. It spreads a stupefying culture and promotes easy money and the possibility of a life in luxury. This leads young people to rapidly indebt themselves, constituting an obstacle for their involvement in the struggle while facilitating the objective tendencies towards delinquency.

Bourgeois, petty-bourgeois, racist, chauvinist and obscurantist ideas find fertile ground in a part of the youth because of the class character of education.

Such bourgeois campaigns can all the more easily strike root in that part of the youth that has grown up in conditions of the victory of counterrevolution. This particularly holds true for the youth in the formerly socialist countries that hasn't lived the achievements of socialism.

### **1.5 THE YOUTH'S RESISTANCE TO THE CAPITALIST CRISIS**

Faced with all those aggressions, the youth is showing a lot of resistance, which is becoming more widespread. In several countries, young workers are actively and massively becoming involved in campaigns against the postponement of the retirement age. They are asking a simple question: why kill our parents at work by making them work longer, while so many youth are looking for a job? In other countries, the youth are in the forefront of campaigns against dismissals and employer intimidation.

In Europe, students have been waging a long struggle against the Bologna processus and its consequences: the increase in study costs, privatisation and a more elitist character of education and research.

In other countries, high school students have waged similar battles.

Elsewhere, the youth as a whole is mobilizing and fighting for their rights.

In many countries (both imperialist and underdeveloped countries), the youth has been taking a very active part in the struggle against imperialist wars, and particularly the wars of aggression on Iraq and Afghanistan, and the occupation of Palestine.

Often, the communist youth plays a crucial role in these mobilisations and struggles, and has been at the vanguard of the youth battles against capitalism. In these struggles, they have also been working to convince as many young people as possible of the superiority of our world view and of the alternative the communists are putting forward.

## **1.6 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE YOUTH**

If communism is the future of humanity, future objectively belongs to the youth.

Inevitably the youth has less political and social experience. This makes them more vulnerable to bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideologies (anarchism, ultra-leftism, Trotskyism,...), which the bourgeoisie exploited in order to manipulate them.

But as the youth approaches life with much less bias, this can also be seized as an opportunity by the communists.

The capitalist system drastically limits the material choices of the youth, in terms of jobs, housing, access to education and culture. However, at a young age political and ideological choices have not yet been fixed and are more open. Everything remains to be decided. It is a struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to orient the choice of young people in one way or another. In general, it is well before the age of 35 that one's world outlook and commitment take form.

The youth generally is in better physical and mental health.

The youth is most in touch with new technologies and with the latest developments in society.

## **2 THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTIES VIS-À-VIS THE YOUTH**

In the light of all this, communist parties have a major responsibility to shoulder, but also numerous opportunities to grab, both regarding the attacks the youth is suffering and regarding the resistance it is showing and the future it constitutes.

The communist parties' links with the younger part of the working class and the quality of their links with the working class as a whole directly determine -- in a long-term perspective -- to which extent the overall objectives of the communist parties and their final strategic goal of socialism.

Communist parties have the responsibility to directly, as a party, address the youth, to make the youth struggles their own and to instil them with a revolutionary perspective on the political and organizational levels.

Communist parties have a decisive and irreplaceable role in strengthening the unity of the working class. This means strengthening the integration of the struggles of young workers and students in the overall working class movement. For example, the struggle for popular, free and good quality public education and against its commodification is not just a students' struggle but concerns the entire working class.

This is also reflected in the education of youth, in the fact that there is no future for young people if they do not follow the objective interests of the working class.

In the work of transmitting the traditions of struggle and organizing of the working class in the youth, communist parties have the responsibility to promote a class orientation as against class collaboration.

Finally, the parties have a particular responsibility in the education and accompaniment of young militants and cadres. They have a responsibility in Marxist-Leninist education and in schooling politics and tactics.

## **3 THE SITUATION OF THE YOUTH IN THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES**

Socialism promotes among young people active and conscious participation in the solution of problems affecting them, and develops collective responsibility and solidarity.

In a socialist society, young people have a concrete idea of what they defend and build. The youth is not a victim of the system as under capitalism, but the main beneficiary of the opportunities and possibilities that socialism has to offer.

New perspectives are opening up for Latin America, where young people's access to health, education, culture and popular participation is increasing. This is due to the policies of socialization that are being applied as alternative to neoliberal and capitalist policies, and that are mostly inspired by the actions of socialist Cuba.

A challenge for the socialist countries is the transmission of the revolutionary legacy to new generations who have not experienced the revolution and the immense sacrifices it has required. This is all the more necessary in the continuation of the achievements of the revolution and in the struggles and challenges it poses.

## **4 THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING A STRONG COMMUNIST YOUTH MOVEMENT**

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In his time, Lenin stressed the importance of a youth organization that is independent, while maintaining strong ideological and political links with the Communist Party.

This remains valid today.

The building of a strong youth movement allows to rally the youth and its most conscious layers behind the Party, particularly those who join the working class or are about to join it. It allows to mobilize and reach out to the very broad masses of the youth and to orient their struggles to the side of the working class and the popular movements – against imperialism and towards another, socialist world. It gives the opportunity for an important part of the youth to break with capitalist, social-democrat and petty-bourgeois ideology. It favors the promotion of Marxism-Leninism and of the Communist Party among the youth.

Youth organizations are concentrated primarily where the youth lives, works and organizes.

Even if their dispersion and economic instability render organizing among the working youth more difficult, reaching out to them is of strategic importance. This implies an organized youth work in companies and trade unions, with students working to pay for their studies, in popular neighbourhoods and in communities.

High schools, universities and colleges are places with a high concentration and organisation of youth. In many countries the school and student movements also have a great tradition of struggle.

In all these experiences, on all those different terrains, the communist youth movement wholeheartedly joins the struggles of the youth. It takes off from youth issues (jobs, education, peace and the right to physical integrity, the environment,...). It refuses to play the role of outside commentator. It takes an active part in these struggles in order to orient them in a revolutionary direction, which entails separating them from neoliberal, social-democrat and opportunist petty-bourgeois influences.

The organization of young communists involves in sensibilization and conscientization work, while exposing the class nature of every struggle. It is vigilant to develop the level of the struggle in the direction of greater unity with the rest of the workers movement.

The youth movement also works at its organizational strengthening and the heightening of the organizational level of the youth. Its organizational forms can vary from one country to another -- what is important is that they are adapted to the youth concerned.

Organizational strengthening of the youth is realized through the expansion of the communist youth movement's ranks but also by the strengthening and expansion of all class-based trade union formations and other organizations that involve the youth (for jobs, peace, anti-racism,...).

In addition to actively participating in the struggles of young people, developing their awareness and strengthening their degree of organization, the youth movement has a number of permanent tasks, including:

- The spreading and promotion of Marxism-Leninism among the youth. This is a necessity for the very survival of the communist youth movement but it is likewise a huge opportunity. In fact, the bourgeoisie is not capable of offering the youth any future that responds to their needs. Marxism-Leninism, to the contrary, does offer this tool, this scientific world outlook.
- The promotion of the proletarian class consciousness among the youth. The communist youth movement works for the class unity between the youth and the whole of the world of the workers, their trade unions and their vanguard party. It promotes solidarity initiatives with the working classes, supports strikes and struggles,...
- The promotion of proletarian internationalism. Bourgeois nationalism, racism, xenophobia and chauvinism are among the worst enemies of class struggle and communism. They have to be wiped out at a young age.  
The promotion of internationalism among the youth and the importance of international coordination of the communist youth movement can be done through international meetings, discussions and common actions of the communist youth organizations. This kind of cooperation between young communists can encourage the political and ideological counter-attack of the youth movement in its response to anti-communism and in the defense of socialism as the only alternative to imperialism.  
In addition, initiatives and discussions of communist youth can give perspective and significant political support to the international movement of young anti-imperialists. That way, the WFDY (World Federation of Democratic Youth) was strengthened and has made important steps in deepening its distinct class character.
- The promotion of a value system that is opposed to that of capitalism. The youth movement propagates its values of solidarity, honesty, optimism, sense of collective action, modesty, spirit of work in solidarity, curiosity, openness, criticism and self-criticism, a scientific attitude and the rejection of obscurantism,...
- The fight against the reproduction of discrimination in society within the youth movement. The communist youth movement must fight the discrimination in its ranks that, in society, affects migrant youth and women in particular. Often women and workers of migrant origins are (heavily) under-represented within the communist parties and the organized workers movement in general. The movements of the communist youth can significantly contribute to fill the gap and thus strengthen the unity of the working classes as a whole.
- The integration of the communist youth movement within the overall youth movement. The communist youth movement is the vanguard movement of the youth. That doesn't mean it is an isolated movement. The communist youth movement maintains strong links and dialogue with the entire youth movement (trade union groups, cultural and sports clubs, youth clubs, student organizations, etc.)

In order to build this youth movement, well-trained cadres are needed, capable of building strong links with the youth, their problems, their way of thinking, their expressions of humor and culture. Such a youth movement needs cadres that have acquired sufficient experience in the struggle and in Marxist-Leninist education.

## **5 THE CHALLENGE TO INTEGRATE YOUNG ACTIVISTS AND CADRES INTO THE PARTY**

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The youth constitutes a priority for the Party, because its political and organizational sustainability depends on good work with the youth. The same will also allow the Party's to continuously broaden its sphere of action.

### ***5.1 INCORPORATE THE YOUTH IN THE PARTY***

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Building a solid youth movement allows to assure the education of young revolutionary activists and cadres. They can strengthen and expand the Party's work.

This can only be successful if the young activists and cadres are incorporated in the Party at all levels, with the aim of educating them in the Party's tradition and training them in past experiences. These young militants will be politically and ideologically educated in Marxism-Leninism and in the history of the workers' class struggles in their country and in the whole world. The Party has to attach major importance to the work of incorporating the young comrades and pay attention to their experiences and points of view.

Any spontaneism in this matter may lead to the degradation of the Party.

### ***5.2 INCORPORATE YOUNG CADRES IN THE PARTY LEADERSHIP***

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The incorporation of young militants in the Party has to take place at all levels and also in the Party leadership. The best comrades of any generation have to become involved early enough with the issues at stake and the functions of the Party's highest leadership.

Cadre development has to be organized and managed very well. It has to be done in a balanced way, combining learning from experienced cadres, gradual raising of the level of responsibility, autonomous learning and the eventual introduction of new approaches.

In conclusion we affirm that the struggles of the youth movements around the world inspire us a lot. We will help in their consolidation. We will work to strengthen their links with the workers movement. Together with the entire working class and in alliance with the poor and middle layers of society, the youth can accomplish the historic task of a profound transformation of power, the overthrow of imperialism and capitalism, and the conquest of socialism.