

Russian Komsomols: Builders of the Future

By HERBERT ZAM

The Young Communist League of Russia stands out as one of the biggest factors in Russia after the revolution—in the consolidation of the revolution, in the defense of the revolution against internal and external enemies, in the reconstruction of Russia.

The Young Communist League—A Gigantic Army.

Founded after the revolution, the league has made progress unparalleled in the history of labor by any other working class organization. When we consider it from the viewpoint of membership alone, it is a tremendous force for the building of a Communist society. The league has in its ranks today 1,600,000 members—a Communist army unequalled for discipline, initiative, courage, understanding—an army that is building the future, not only of Russia but of the entire world. The league has in its ranks 80 per cent of the industrial youth, organized in the shops and factories, carrying on the constructive activities of Russia. Forty per cent of the membership of the league comes from the farms, and they bring the message of Communism to the peas-

ants, and teach them how to participate in the new Russia. And the league is growing—growing at the rate of 3,000 new members every day—in itself a remarkable achievement.

The Young Communist League at the Front.

One of the first great accomplishments of the league was its organization for the defense of Soviet Russia against the foreign invaders and against the white armies of world capitalism. At the moment of greatest danger, when the enemies were at the doors of Russia, when the Workers' Republic had to fight on 17 fronts against a dozen foes, the Young Communist League sent its best and most devoted members into the army and navy, where they were always in the places of greatest danger, always in the thick of the fight, defending the proletarian revolution against all enemies. Hundreds of thousands of members of the Young Communist League were sent into the red army, and they stayed and fought until all danger was over. After the Kronstadt rebellion, when it was seen that the enemies of the Workers' Republic had carried on work among the sailors, and that it was necessary to counter-

act their activities, the Young Communist League "adopted" the fleet and made it its special function to supply it with red sailors. A big campaign was carried on for this purpose, and in one week, thousands of Young Communists joined the navy. Today, 75 per cent of the red sailors are members of the league, as well as 60 per cent of the red soldiers.

The Young Communist League in the Red Army and Navy.

The activities of the Young Communist League in the army and navy did not end with the passing of the danger. These activities were turned into different channels. Instead of organizing for the attack against the military forces of capitalism, the league organized for the attack against another enemy—illiteracy and ignorance. In every regiment, in every company, libraries, reading circles, educational groups were set up. Mighty efforts were made to exterminate illiteracy and to give every soldier a political education. This work was entirely successful, and today, the fleet is 100 per cent literate, while the army is 95 per cent literate, the 5 per cent illiteracy being among new recruits, who, upon leaving the service, are no longer illiterate.

The Young Communist League on the Industrial Front.

From the battle front, the league turned its attention to the industrial front. The mere fact that 80 per cent of the industrial youth are members of the Y. C. L. is sufficient indication of the success of this work. Russia's greatest need in its reconstruction was technicians and trained mechanics. The Y. C. L. undertook the task of training mechanics. In every factory where a nucleus of the league existed, special machinery was set up for the training of the young workers, for increasing their knowledge of the industry and making them more efficient in their work. In the "factory constructive conferences" which are held in every factory of Russia, the Young Communist League plays a leading role. Reconstruction is one of the most important tasks of every Young Communist.

The Young Communist League and the Rural Youth.

After the difficulties experienced with the peasants because of their inability to understand the workings of the new Russia, the Young Communist League decided that it must pay more attention to the rural youth, that it must draw more young peasants into its ranks, that the peasants could be won over to Communism thru the

youth. The work, begun only two years ago, has resulted in 650,000 young peasants joining the Young Communist League, and they are joining in greater numbers every day. The Young Communist League is the greatest help to the peasants in teaching them the use of modern machinery and modern methods of agriculture. Everywhere the league sends out special instructors, propaganda, demonstrators, and the peasants are being won over very rapidly. In this work, the Young Communist League even outstrips the Communist Party. While the party has 6,000 nuclei in the villages, the league has 35,000.

The Young Communist Press.

The Young Communist League has a tremendous influence. It is the only youth organization in the history of the world with such a wide influence. The league has ten daily newspapers—there is not another youth organization anywhere in the world that has even one. It has 50 other newspapers, ranging from those that come out every other day, to those that are issued once a month. Of these newspapers, ten are in as many different languages, for the millions of people in Russia who speak a language other than Russian. These newspapers have a tremendous circu-

lation. The one in Leningrad has a circulation of 60,000 and the one in Moscow, 70,000. The central organ of the league, which was founded at the beginning of the year, and is intended mainly for functionaries, already has a circulation of 120,000 and it is growing so rapidly that by the end of the year it will be well over the 200,000 mark. The influence of an organization having such a machinery at its disposal can be imagined.

The Organization of the Children.

Another astounding feature of the work of the league is the organization of children. Children between the ages of ten and sixteen belong to the Young Pioneers which has two million members today, and is rapidly growing. Children under ten years of age belong to the Young Octobrists, which, altho organized but a short time ago, already has 300,000 members. Both of these organizations are under the supervision of the Young Communist League. The Young Pioneers have already established a Daily Newspaper. This is remarkable. That an organization of children should have a daily newspaper—only under a workers' government is such a thing possible. In these organizations, the children receive an educa-

tion which they cannot possibly obtain in a school. Here they not only learn, but they actually participate in building up the country. They learn thru doing, and the work they do is not mere experimental work, but actually the necessary work of the country.

In Soviet Russia, child labor does not exist, and youth labor exists under the most favorable conditions. All young workers attend work schools which are attached to the factory, where the young workers learn a trade without being exploited or apprenticed while doing so. At the same time, they have the opportunity of continuing their studies as long as they wish. In Russia, the program of the Young Communist International, the social reorganization of youth labor, is being translated into life, and the Young Communist League is the initiator and executor of this program. The Young Communist League of Russia is the backbone of the Young Communist International. We also are members of the Young Communist International. We must take our stand shoulder to shoulder with the Y. C. L. of Russia. Let us follow the example of the Young Communists of Russia, the builders of the future!