

Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists celebrates 5-year anniversary

Our reporters
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Last week, the Young Guard of Bolshevik Leninists (YGBL), a youth organization in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union that has declared its political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International, celebrated its 5-year anniversary. The YGBL was founded on February 23, 2018, which also marked the centenary of the formation of the Red Army under the leadership of Leon Trotsky.

In greetings brought to the meeting, David North, the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, stressed the significance of the YGBL's turn to the world Trotskyist movement based on the long-standing struggle by the ICFI in defense of the continuity of Trotskyism. North reviewed the historical and theoretical issues involved in the so-called "Russian question," which has come up repeatedly at critical turning points in the history of Trotskyism. The revolutionary movement defended Marxism and the programmatic principles of the October Revolution in the face of the pressures exerted by the nationalist reaction against the revolution by Stalinism and the emergence of various forms of petty bourgeois opportunism.

The meeting was marked by a high level of consciousness among its participants of the historical and political tasks confronting workers and young people in the fight to build sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Ostap Rerikh, the head and co-founder of the YGBL, stated at the onset of the meeting, "The Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists was conceived of from its very inception as the organization that will fight for the truth about Lev Davidovich Trotsky, as an organization that clears the path so that a new generation of fighters for socialism can walk freely on it."

Rerikh stressed that the YGBL was dedicated to the conscious fight against Stalinism and various forms of petty bourgeois nationalist and anti-Marxist politics. He said, "We must direct our fire equally against both Stalinism and all these so-called 'Marxists,' in order to defeat them. They are, in fact, pseudo-Marxists, who replace the class struggle with identity politics, which prioritizes not the struggle of the proletariat, but the struggle between different identities."

The YGBL established political relations with the International Committee of the Fourth International shortly before the outbreak of the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022. As a result, Rerikh explained,

When on February 24, 2022 the first shots were fired and the shells began raining down from the sky, we were not alone; we were with the International Committee of the Fourth International. Their articles and statements were our articles and statements, for we could not stand otherwise, for we could have no other position on what was happening, for their position and assessment was our position and assessment.

Of course, when we were only thinking about uniting with the International Committee of the Fourth International, we knew little

of what we later learned when we actually established contact with it. Today, our comrades in the YGBL know very well what Pabloism is in both theory and in practice. They know perfectly well who represents a variety of Pabloism in Russia, who is fighting so hard for the title of the "true Grantites", and they know, above all, that the International Committee of the Fourth International represents not simply one of many tendencies within the Fourth International, but that it represents the Fourth International itself.

Andrei Ritsky, a leader of the organization who has contributed many important articles to the WWS, also emphasized the centrality of history for the political orientation of the YGBL.

The starting point for an analysis of the current political situation is a clear understanding of the legacy left to us by Stalinism and the need for a complete break with it. Without this there can be no further analysis. We must take the necessary measures to solve two very important problems: 1) The education of the core cadre; 2) The strengthening of the unity of our cadres throughout the former USSR.

When we fight for the truth about Trotsky, and about his true followers, we do so not just for the sake of Trotskyism itself. It was for a reason that we chose the International Committee as our mentors and comrades. It was for a reason that we declared war on all kinds of opportunism. It was for a reason that we decided to take serious steps to educate the core cadre for the building of a section. All of this represents a conscious response to a state of affairs that we confront because of the entire preceding history.

We are doing this so that the working class, armed with advanced theory, can overcome the resistance of the bourgeoisie and carry out the socialist revolution throughout the world! It is impossible to be a Marxist without being a Trotskyist. That is why the next years for the strengthening and development of the YGBL are only possible on this basis—an understanding of Trotskyism.

Clara Weiss brought greetings to the meeting on behalf of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth and student organization of the International Committee, of which the YGBL forms part. Stressing that the war and the present situation more broadly could only be understood within the context of the "political genocide" of socialists in the Great Terror in the 1930s and the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy, she said,

Thirty years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, no one can deny that the warnings of the ICFI about the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism and the disastrous consequences of the destruction of the USSR have been tragically vindicated. But the results of this historical process are not only the war and the other intersecting crises that we now see unfolding. As difficult as the conditions facing workers and youth today are, we have one tremendous historical advantage: We can build on the struggle of generations of Trotskyists in the International Committee who have accumulated colossal political experiences and historical and intellectual capital. When youth formed groups in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s and heroically sought to oppose the Stalinist bureaucracy from the left and reconnect with the heritage of Trotsky and Lenin, they tragically remained cut off from the Fourth International. The Stalinist bureaucracy ruthlessly murdered their leaders and imprisoned their members, unbeknownst to the outside world. By contrast, the YGBL, relatively early in its history, was able to contact the International Committee and develop a close collaboration with it.

In a lively discussion about the significance of the anniversary, one YGBL member said:

We are the heirs of October and everyone in our ranks shoulders a very special task: the task of constructing communism. And in order to achieve this, we must do one thing: we must study; knowledge is the key to victory. We hold a great heritage in our hands. We must learn to use it wisely. The bourgeoisie now actively tries to indoctrinate the youth and tries to mislead it, replacing internationalism with vicious chauvinism and nationalism. All their speeches are imbued with bourgeois nationalism against which we must fight. We must fight for our youth. For if we won't do it they will become cannon fodder for the bourgeoisie in the struggle against us. The youth must live according to the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky.

In responding to the discussion, David North placed the meeting in its broader political context of the pandemic, the war and the emergence of a global movement by the working class, stating:

Everywhere in the world, the oppressed masses are confronting the complete bankruptcy of this outmoded social system which really should have been overthrown during the last century. Look at what has taken place in just the past three years. A pandemic has claimed the lives of 20-25 million people throughout the world, and the ruling class has responded to this disease with an indifference that even exceeds that of the nobility in the era 700 years ago of the Black Death.

The fact is that this was a preventable pandemic. Had there been coordinated and scientifically guided collaboration throughout the world, this disease could have been eradicated with minimal loss of life. But now we have a situation in every country of the world, in the US, Germany, England, Ukraine, Russia, China—everywhere—where death has been normalized. It has become a matter of complete indifference to the governments as to how many people die each day. In America, the number of people dying each day of COVID is estimated between 500-1,000. No one knows because there is no accurate reporting.

Within the last two weeks, the earthquake in Turkey and Syria has claimed at least 100,000 lives. Again, no one knows what the exact number is. An emergency now confronts the people in both countries who are deprived of basic necessities to live. But the needs of the people in Turkey and Syria in the face of yet another catastrophe—which also could have been prevented—is being more or less ignored. The US and NATO are spending billions to prosecute the war in Ukraine and are giving virtually nothing to save the lives of people in Turkey and Syria. One could give countless other examples. That is the reality of modern-day, bankrupt, reactionary capitalism. And this is becoming clearer and clearer to the working class throughout the world.

So the conditions which we confront today for the building of the Fourth International as the leadership of the global working class are in a historic sense immensely favorable. The influence of the International Committee is steadily expanding. This is because our program corresponds to historical necessity. And that is what gives us immense confidence in our perspective and in the inevitability of our success.

So, comrades, on this important anniversary, and it is a day of great importance, you can be proud of what you have accomplished, but you must understand that the greatest tasks lie ahead. You are young, you must study. You must read as much as possible of Trotsky, of Lenin, of all the great classical Marxists, and you must, of course, familiarize yourself with the entire history of the Fourth International. In that way you are preparing yourselves, and through your efforts the working class within Russia and throughout the former Soviet Union, for the great revolutionary struggles into which it will be drawn by the global crisis of capitalism.



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