

# Study of Youth Education Ideas in Lenin's Tasks of the Youth League

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**Abstract:** The Tasks of the Youth League was published in the transition period of Soviet Russia from wartime communism to the new economic policy, when people's livelihoods were poor, young people's motivation for learning was low, theoretical learning was detached from practice, and extreme leftist ideology prevailed in the country. At this critical time, Lenin emphasised the importance of learning to young people in "Tasks of the Youth League", advocating that young people should strive to learn all the knowledge of mankind, insist on the combination of theory and practice in the process of learning, and abide by communist morality. Combined with the goal and current situation of youth ideological education in the new era, The Tasks of the Youth League has an important revelation for the youth education work in China.

**Keywords:** Youth; Lenin; Tasks of the Youth League; ideological and political education.

## 1. Introduction

On 2 October 1920, at the Third National Congress of the Young Communist League in Russia, Lenin made a speech on the basic tasks of the Young Communist League and how to carry out communist education for young people, which was published under the name of "Tasks of the Youth League". The Tasks of the Youth League was published in Lenin's later years and was his systematic explanation of the ideological and political education of youth.

Since the 18th Party Congress, the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has always attached great importance to youth education and the work of the Communist Youth League. One hundred years after the publication of Tasks of the Youth League, an in-depth exploration of the ideas of youth education therein has an important role to play in enlightening us on how to correctly understand the youth and cultivate them in the new historical period.

## 2. The Background of The Time When "Tasks of The Youth League" Was Published

In order to deeply understand an article, it is necessary to have a certain understanding of the background of the era in which it was published. To study Lenin's "Tasks of the Youth League", we also need to return to the historical lineage of the Russian Revolution to understand and think.

(i) Reconstruction: Soviet Russia in a period of transition from war to peace-building.

The article "The Tasks of the Youth League" was published at a time when Soviet Russia was in a period of transition from war to peace, when years of war had left the economy of Soviet Russia in ruins and the people living in poverty. After the end of the war, the abolition of wartime communist policies and the restoration of production as soon as possible, especially "the transformation and restoration of industry and agriculture on the basis of modern technology based on modern science, technology, and electricity"[1] became the top priority of Soviet Russia.

In such a critical period of transition from wartime communism to the New Economic Policy, youth played an important role in economic construction. Therefore, it was the primary task of the Youth League to call upon the youth to take the initiative in assuming the responsibility for the construction of a communist society, to study communist theory and to devote themselves to the practice of communism.

(ii) Theory divorced from practice: dogmatism in youth communist learning

Because of the influence of the old capitalist society, young people often "confine themselves to understanding only what is in communist writings, books and pamphlets, thus creating some communist nerds and braggarts." [1] The "nerds" recite communist books and pamphlets superficially, without going into detail, without combining theoretical study with practice in order to truly understand the theories in the books; and the "braggarts", although they have mastered the knowledge of communism, do not test and develop it in practice, but only shout slogans. Although they possessed communist knowledge, they did not test and develop it in practice, but only shouted slogans and did not want to participate in the construction of communism. At that time, when Soviet Russia was still in the process of rebuilding, the problems of food and clothing for the people and of education for the general public had to be solved urgently, which required countless young people to devote themselves to the construction of communism, to apply what they had learnt in practice, and to respond positively to the needs of the country's construction.

(iii) Far-left ideology: "proletarian culturalists" jeopardised the cause of culture and education.

At that time, the "proletarian culturalists" in Soviet Russia advocated the creation of a proletarian culture that would completely break with the old culture, under the banner of creating a proletarian class culture. They even tried to create a so-called "pure" proletarian culture, divorced from the real workers and intellectuals. The ultra-leftist ideology of the "proletarian culture faction" has caused serious harm to the cause of culture and education. In particular, in the area of morality, many theoreticians "regarded morality as the sum total of behavioural norms opposed to the individual, as a tool

of the exploiting class to mentally enslave the working people, and as a kind of hypocritical and subtle moral preaching." [4] At that time, "morality" was regarded as a spiritual yoke that prevented human freedom and self-realisation, as hypocritical and external. The proletarian culturalists, led by Bogdanov, went so far as to suggest that the proletariat wanted to be free and to abandon all morality and hypocritical ethics. Under the circumstances, how to arm young people with correct values and make them realise the reality and scientific nature of communist morality became a major challenge for the Russian Young Communist League.

### 3. The Ideology of Youth Education in the Tasks of the Youth League

In order to restore the ruined national economy and guide the youth to actively study communist theory and devote themselves to communist construction, Lenin systematically expounded the theory of youth education in "Tasks of the Youth League".

(i) Youth should be good at absorbing all human knowledge.

Young people are charged with the mission of building a communist society, and in the light of this, Lenin emphasised that "the task of youth in general, and the task of the Young Communist League and other organisations in particular, can be expressed in a single sentence, namely, to learn." [1] Here, the learning is naturally about communism, as Lenin pointed out, "We can only use all the knowledge, organisations and organs bequeathed to us by the old society, and build communism under the conditions of the human and material resources bequeathed to us by the old society." [1] Therefore, in order for youth to learn communism thoroughly, they must be adept at drawing on the entire knowledge of mankind, and "proletarian culture should be the lawful development of all the knowledge created by mankind under the oppression of capitalist, landowning and bureaucratic society." [1] "One can only become a communist by learning about all the wealth created by mankind to enrich one's mind." [1] It is also only by learning to acquire the modern knowledge necessary for the construction of communism that one can apply this knowledge to concrete work and dedicate oneself to the economic construction of the country.

Here Lenin was criticising those "nerds" and "braggarts" who thought that the study of communism was limited to the understanding of communist writings, books and pamphlets, and who were not able to integrate the knowledge of communism, and therefore could not really understand the laws of the historical development of mankind, and naturally could not put the laws of the development of communism to use. They are not able to integrate communist knowledge, and so they do not really understand the laws of human history and development, and naturally they are unable to combine communist theory with practice. "Marxism is a model of communism emerging from all human knowledge." [1] It has studied the laws of the development of human society in a rigorous and scientific manner and made the most rigorous and profound study of capitalist society before drawing its conclusions, which is the method and attitude that young people should adopt in studying communism. It is only by drawing on all the knowledge of mankind that the communism learnt by young people is not something to be "eaten alive", but a conclusion reached after careful consideration.

(ii) Young people must insist on combining theory and

practice in their studies.

"One of the greatest scourges left to us by the old capitalist society is the complete disconnection between books and the practice of life." [1] In his speech, Lenin once again emphasised the importance of linking theory with practice in the process of youth learning. He pointed out, "Away from work, away from the struggle, bookish knowledge about communism derived from communist pamphlets and writings can be said to be worthless." [1]

During this period, Lenin asked the youth to combine theory with practice by doing two things:

The first was to take an active part in the class struggle of the proletarians against exploitation, stating that "the Young Communist League can only be consistent with the title Young Communist League if it links every step in its own training, upbringing and education with participation in the general struggle of all the labourers against the exploiters." [1]

Secondly, to participate in the construction of communism, Lenin demanded that young people should be actively involved in socio-economic construction where it was needed. For example, to study modern science, especially the science of electricity, in order to speed up the electrification of the industrial and agricultural sectors; to participate in the work of vegetable gardens on the outskirts of the city, applying what they learnt to the most basic labour and optimising farming methods, so that the people would stop starving as soon as possible; to participate in the work of eradicating illiteracy, helping illiterate young people to get rid of ignorance as soon as possible, and to learn the basics of culture and knowledge, and so on. "The Young Communist League should be a commando unit capable of supporting all kinds of work and showing initiative everywhere." [1] Only in this way can the Young Communist League really penetrate into the people's masses, really participate in the struggle and in the labour of the workers and peasants, and avoid going down the old bourgeois road.

(iii) Youth Education to Foster Communist Morality

Lenin refuted the allegation that "Communism rejects all morality" as a stolen concept that blinded the workers and peasants, stressing that "we reject the so-called morality derived from the concepts of the superhuman and the superclass, because it is a deceptive practice used by the landlords and capitalists to fool the workers and peasants and to confine their minds." [1] Instead, we advocate a morality that is totally subordinate to the interests of the proletarian struggle, "a morality that serves to unite the workers against all exploitation and all petty privatisation." [1]

Lenin demanded that the youth "educate themselves into true communists in a disciplined and brutal struggle against the bourgeoisie." [1] To participate in such a struggle, it is necessary to cultivate in young people a noble communist morality - to learn well, to strive to absorb all the fruits of human civilisation; to be able to fight, to dare to fight, to fight for the liberation of human society from the exploitation of labour; to be disciplined, to unite as one in a brutal class struggle, and to maintain an easy-going mentality and a firm will; to be willing to devote oneself to the service of society, and to reject the selfish and self-interested mentality of capitalist society. They should be willing to give of themselves, reject the selfish mentality and habits of thinking of capitalist society, and learn to sacrifice themselves for others and be willing to give of themselves.

#### 4. The Inspiration of "The Mission of the Youth League" for Contemporary Youth Education

The rise of the youth is the rise of the country, the strength of the youth is the strength of the country, and the youth are an important force for social development. Since the 18th Party Congress, the Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core has always put youth education and the work of the Communist Youth League in an important position. By studying the ideas of youth education in the Tasks of the Youth League, we can gain the following insights into youth education.

(i) Guide young people to learn all the excellent cultural achievements of mankind and insist on comprehensive development.

In The Tasks of the Youth League, Lenin emphasised that youth league members should learn basic knowledge to enhance their thinking power, and that they should be good at absorbing all the knowledge of mankind. In modern times, General Secretary Xi Jinping has also proposed that "young people should humbly study and learn from all the fruits of civilisation created by human society." [2] In order to enable young people to develop in a comprehensive manner, it is necessary to educate young people to study widely and deeply. In the current era of economic globalisation with rapid economic and technological development, the only way for young people not to be abandoned by the times is to insist on continuous learning.

Young people should study Marxist theory, "Insisting on arming the minds of young people with Marxist theory can enable them to resist the erosion of wrong and corrupt culture in the midst of all kinds of ideological and cultural turbulence, and to firmly establish a correct worldview, outlook on life and values." [5] We have to guide young people to study Marxist theory and use Marxist positions, views and methods to study and solve problems; young people also have to study natural sciences and modern technology, have their own basic knowledge system and build up their own knowledge in a certain specialised field, have solid professional knowledge and enhance their practical skills in life and production; the excellent traditional culture, which has been bred in the 5,000 years of the Chinese nation's development process, is our The excellent traditional culture nurtured during the 5,000 years of development of the Chinese nation is the inexhaustible spiritual impetus for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and young people should be firm in their cultural self-confidence, and endeavour to study, inherit and carry forward the excellent traditional culture of China; and the excellent achievements of the process of construction and development of the rest of the world and science and technology, we must likewise guide the young people to combine with the reality of our country, and humbly ask for advice, and make full use of the fruits of the world's excellent civilisation.

(ii) Adhering to the teaching method of linking theory to practice and enhancing the practical skills of young people.

Lenin severely criticised the dogmatic phenomenon of communist learning in The Tasks of the Youth League, pointing out that young people should not rely solely on the recitation of books and should not be detached from the practice of social production and life. General Secretary Xi Jinping also pointed out at a symposium for teachers of ideological and political theory classes in schools that they should "adhere to the unity of theory and practice, train people

with scientific theories, attach importance to the practical nature of ideological and political classes, combine the small classroom of ideology and politics with the big classroom of society, and educate and guide students to set up a great swan ambition and be a striver." [3]

Young ideological and political educators should recognise the importance of practical education and guide students to actively participate in professional practical training and social practice. Empty talk is misleading, practical work is prosperous, young people should also enhance the sense of public service, into social public service and community activities, or to the grassroots in the countryside to dedicate their strength. Apply the theoretical knowledge learnt to the socialist construction, and fly youth in the struggle.

(iii) Strengthening the moral cultivation of young people and building a firm moral foundation for them

Lenin's "Tasks of the Youth League" requires young people to practice and promote communist morality, and puts forward the specific moral requirements of good learning, discipline, dedication, and dare to struggle. And the task of moral cultivation of contemporary youth also requires ideological and political educators to do the same:

(1) Make clear the importance of cultivating the ideals and beliefs of youth. If young people have faith, the country has strength and the nation has hope. Lenin attached importance to the education of communist beliefs for young people in "The Tasks of the Youth League", so that young people believe that communism can be realised and will be realised in the hands of young people. Young people are guided to make the realisation of communism the goal of their struggle. At present, under the influence of economic globalisation and ideological invasion, young people's ideal beliefs are lacking, which further requires ideological and political educators to enhance the cultivation of ideals and beliefs, so as to make young people firm in their communist beliefs and get rid of their spiritual confusion and hesitation.

(2) Guiding young people to be firm in their cultural self-confidence, inheriting and carrying forward traditional Chinese virtues, promoting the national spirit and the spirit of the times carried forward in the course of China's socialist revolution, construction and reform, and practising socialist core values, integrating both traditional Chinese virtues and the spirit of contemporary China into young people's daily lives, studies and work.

Since its inception, Marxism has regarded youth as an important force for social development. With strong vitality and vigour, young people are the commandos and forces of social construction and reform. It is of great significance to revisit the Tasks of the Youth League, study its ideas on youth education, combine them with the requirements and ardent expectations of socialism with Chinese characteristics for youth education in today's new era, and gain some insights on youth education from them to cultivate young people of the times who will take up the great responsibility of national rejuvenation.

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