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CONSEIL DE LA FEDERATION MONDIALE DE LA JEUNESSE DEMOCRATIQUE
COUNCIL OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH
СОВЕТ ВСЕМИРНОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКОЙ МОЛОДЕЖИ
CONSEJO DE LA FEDERACION MUNDIAL DE LA JUVENTUD DEMOCRATICA
世界民主青年聯盟理事會

PEKIN - 1954

COUNCIL OF THE
WORLD FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC YOUTH
PEKING, 9 - 15 AUGUST 1954

Intervention on the 2nd point of
the agenda - AUSTRIA

Bewysstuk No.....
Gekry by..... A. M. Kathrada
Deur..... J. S. J. Nelberg
Te..... Khalid House 13
Datum..... 22.9.54
Verwysings No..... C. S.

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Walter Wachs, Austria

Dear Friends,

Before I refer to the report of our friend, Jaques Denis, I would like, in the name of my organisation, to express our thanks to the WFDY for making it possible for us to participate at the Council Meeting.

I would most heartily like to thank our Chinese friends and hosts for all the kindness, hospitality, attention and welcome, which they have shown us.

Now about our work among the youth in the villages and farms. Our organisation, the Free Austrian Youth, is almost completely composed of young people from industrial areas. To tell the truth, our groups and leaders have done very little work around the question of the living conditions, problems and desires of the youth of the villages. When work has been carried out in this field, it has been spasmodic.

The appeal of the youth of San Alberto de Ravenna, and the proposals which came to us from the Secretariat of the WFDY, made it necessary for us to deal more seriously with the living conditions of the youth of the countryside. I will not speak now of the living conditions, problems and desires, and the demands of the Austrian rural youth, as these are included in principle in the report of this point of the agenda. These are fundamentally the same for rural youth in other middle and western European capitalist countries.

Here are the most important factors of our work in the countryside. At a Conference at the end of September 1953 in Burgenland, in a quite agricultural area, a programme of demands was drawn up which contained the most essential demands both of the agricultural workers and the rural youth. At the same time, measures were taken to carry out this programme. We have already achieved successful results, such as the realisation of one point of the programme of demands. In Austria there are now laws which say, that:

1 - the waiting period necessary before one receives unemployment benefit be reduced from 52 weeks in two years to 20 weeks. That means that the young agricultural workers have the right to these unemployment benefits if they can prove 20 weeks of work during the year. The same applies in the case of health benefit.

2 - From now on, agricultural work is acknowledged also as skilled work. There will be from now on skilled and unskilled agricultural workers. With regard to wages, the skilled agricultural workers will be in a better position. Training begins with apprenticeship. This is in general in agriculture two years, but in special fields, such as wine-growing, fruit-growing, gardening, fish-breeding, forestry, this is three years. After finishing the exam one is entitled to be called a skilled agricultural worker, etc.

Those decisive, but also encouraging results are dependent on the fight of the progressive forces for a better life for the rural youth - one must, however, see that they are as well an expression of the determined activity of the rural youth for their rights, of young people who belong to other youth organisations or unorganised youth.

Our friend, Denis, took the example of my country that the youth papers of different organisations often raise the same demands, or they take the same stand in connection with questions concerning rural youth. This shows that other youth organisations also, which unconditionally support the policy of the government which is wholly responsible for the miserable living conditions of rural youth, must give expression to the just desires and demands of the youth of the countryside. Where there are common demands, there must be common ways, too.

Our organisation has not understood until now that this unity of demands should be turned into united activity with the other organisations. Even if, according to my opinion, it has not been possible until now to establish united action to carry out common demands with leading organs of other youth organisations for political reasons, this must, however, be possible with groups and officials in villages and farms. Our friend, Denis, is right -- we must approach them boldly. For our future work we will be guided by this motto, and will be certain of success.

We have already been preparing for some time the International Gathering, through articles, radio talks, leaflets, social evening, etc. At the end of August, in two places, traditional harvest festivals will take place, at which cultural groups will perform and the young people will compete in sports events. At these harvest festivals discussions with the rural youth on their just demands will also take place, of which the most important for the rural youth is to be able to live a decent life and equal status with the social rights of the industrial youth as well as to assure land and work for the sons and daughters of farmers, sharecroppers and poor peasants, as well as the opportunity of setting up a home. At the same time, attention will be called to the International Gathering of Rural Youth through talks and leaflets.

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On the initiative of the WFDY a cultural competition will be launched on themes concerning rural youth. The competition will be popularised through leaflets, the press and radio. The best works will receive prizes, the first prize being a prepaid trip the next World Youth Festival, the second prize will be seven days holiday in a winter sports resort. On the occasion of the International Gathering we will organise an exhibition of the entries. We propose that the other countries send their entries directly to the International Preparatory Committee so that we can prepare the exhibition at the time of the Gathering.

Besides this competition we will organise a football championship of the rural youth to popularise the Rural Gathering. Of course, the events and the discussions will continue during which the delegates will be elected.

We must during the preparations for the Gathering think of its significance. The point made by our friend, Denis, of consolidating and setting up new organisations in the countryside, seems to me very valuable. The work in the countryside can, of course, not end with the Gathering but the campaign through its results and experiences must be continued. We have already a few examples, where groups from industrial centres have taken over the job of helping certain villages. Most of these contacts came about by chance for example at the traditional Whitsuntide gatherings. Many of them continued and led to weekend excursions, cultural and sporting events. Therefore we will propose this form of help to other organizations in industrial areas. We consider that a further possibility of strengthening our influence in the countryside lies in the building of cultural and sports groups. Experiences shows us however that these groups can only be strengthened by means of continued material, cultural and political support. In the event of this support not being given early enough or of it weakening, these groups go out of existence.

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Therefore I agree with friend Denis when he speaks of the political solidarity and the help of the youth of the towns and of the youth in the countryside. I would like to add something regarding conditions in Austria. The development of the struggle of the youth of the countryside, the drawing in of many boys and girls from the large farms and villages into the struggle for their rightful demands is only possible when the youth of the industrial areas continuously bring in their driving, organizing, and helping strength. We will work therefore in this direction to strengthen our efforts to clarify and organize the struggle of youth in the countryside for their just demands and their rights. Therefore the concrete suggestions and the report of J. Denis are valuable pointers in our further work.

According to the proposals of the International Preparatory Committee the International Gathering of Rural Youth will take place from 9-15 December in Vienna, the capital of our country.

In accordance with the wishes of our organization I warmly welcome you and promise to do everything possible, according to the modest strength of our organization to support the International Preparatory Committee, in order to ensure the satisfactory progress and success of the International Gathering of Rural Youth.

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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