

A youth festival dedicated to the values of humanity

HARRY WARREN looks ahead to a revolutionary youth celebration in honour of peace and international solidarity

UPON arrival at the Black Sea, one is met with mild weather, Russian courtesy and this October, the World Festival of Youth and Students. For 70 years, the World Festival of Youth and Students has been a great congregation of the young left, where delegates meet to attend seminars and learn of socialist practice.

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This year the festival takes place in Sochi, Russia, 100 years after the revolution and not only celebrates the whole of the workers' movement, but also what is great in the youth equivalent of that.

The largest ever attendance for the festival took place in Moscow in 1957, when over 34,000 delegates from 130 countries attended.

The anti-imperialist meeting was held the year after perhaps the most despicable act of imperialism of the latter part of the decade: the Suez invasion.

This year, many thousands of young people will gather to celebrate the anniversary of the revolution and attend discussions and seminars on many issues including imperialism, the environment, fascism and youth rights.

Sochi will hold special celebration of the lives of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and the former president of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (commonly known as

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Western Sahara) Mohamed Abdelaziz — who all fought for anti-imperialist gains and goals.

The British delegation will be led by the Young Communist League, which forms a part of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY), founded in in 1945 on the back of the disgust at fascism.

From the pledge of the WFDY comes the rather beautiful oath: “To eliminate want, frustration and enforced idleness,” a mighty roar against reactionaries that is held to this day.

An organisation forged out of the ruins of the second world war, the WFDY to this day maintains and upholds the values of humanity and dignity. In fact it has pledged peace in every single one of its festival mottos.

It is absolutely fitting that Russia hosts this event 100 years after the revolution.

Today, there may be differences between individuals on how to achieve a socialism internationally but we do what we must to form the international socialist revolution. The differences are what define us; the similarities are what bring us together.

The Russian Revolution had a key goal of finding jobs for all of Russia's — at the time disillusioned — young people, something that to this day the WFDY works for.

The revolution bought about, although not immediately, a state of 100 per cent employment, and although not communism, profound socialism.

Among the topics and discussions at the World Festival of Youth and Students will be conferences on the goals and achievements of the Great October Revolution; the legacy of Che Guevara, the great anti-imperialist Mohamed Abdelaziz, and the role of the WFDY as the main youth anti-imperialist organisation.

Other conferences will focus on specific regions of the world. A special seminar will be held on the role and the contribution of the student movement in the struggle against imperialism for peace and solidarity in the Americas, and another focusing on embargoes and sanctions. These will be crucial for both Cuban and Venezuelan solidarity.

Africa forms much of the discussions too. There will be talks concentrating on rights and equality as well as the struggle against the rise of fascism and against anti-communism, racism and xenophobia — a struggle not only relevant to Africa, but to all nations of the international.

Part of the festival will be dedicated to the Middle East and the struggle for the youth to have universal and free access to health, education, science, culture and information. This is a huge issue in the region in which there are significant bridges to be built.

The Asia-Pacific region will also see its discussion focusing on the consequences of capitalist crisis, and particularly

people's rights, unemployment and the precarious situation of youth.

We will also get to celebrate Russia's own socialist achievements of the last century — perhaps some of the greatest around the world.

There is sure to be more on the Great October Revolution, how the USSR “destroyed the invader,” and many aspects of socialism in Russia today.

The festival concludes with a spectacular closing ceremony, and will be a fitting conclusion to what is set to be a wonderful week. I, for one, am very excited to attend the festival; to celebrate peace, to aim to end imperialism, and to learn more of the heroes of my life.

Meeting others of the WFDY will be a privilege; learning more of their countries and their struggles. In words and song; the internationale will unite the human race.

- The 2017 World Festival of Youth and Students will be held on October 14 to 22 in Sochi, Russia. For more info visit: russia2017.com/en/.

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