

[Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, in the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of the Union of Young Communists, at the 'Karl Marx' Theater, April 4, 2002 \[1\]](#)

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Dear Comrades:

When the Revolution triumphed in 1959, the fighters of the Rebel Army were so young that most of the leaders and officers could have been members of the Union of Young Communists. The same could be said of those who died at Moncada and in the first ten days after the 'Granma' landing or during the two years of clandestine struggle in the mountains, planes and cities.

In the days leading up to this anniversary we have heard all about the fertile history of the Union of Young Communists, preceded by the Association of Young Rebels, which had emerged from the union of all the young revolutionaries on October 21, 1960.

A year and a half later, on April 4, 1962, the Union of Young Communists was born under its current and glorious name. It was born into a rabid anti-communist climate, in the midst of a colossal battle on all fronts unleashed by the forces of imperialism against the Cuban Revolution. The UYC came to life at an exceptional moment, three years, three months and four days after the first of January 1959.

After the Revolution's first radical steps ^¾ the exemplary punishment of many murderers and torturers who had cruelly slaughtered thousands of our countrymen, the recovery of the ill-gotten gains accumulated over the seven years of tyranny, the reinstatement of tens of thousands of people who had been unjustly laid off work, the drastic reduction of the inflated rents imposed by unscrupulous landlords and of the abusive pricing of public services and medicines, and many other similar measures in the people's favor^¾, on May 17, just four months and a few days after the triumph of the Revolution, the first Land Reform Law was issued. This sounded the death knell for latifundia and poverty, unemployment and hunger for hundreds of thousands of peasant families and farm workers, who were largely illiterate and lacking access to schools or medical services.

As most of the land was the property of powerful American companies and a handful of large Cuban landowners, this law unleashed fierce opposition from both these sectors allied with the Cuban bourgeoisie. After the United States' intervention in Cuba's War of Independence against Spain, U.S. companies had acquired Cuban land at ridiculously low prices. The powerful empire immediately launched a policy of hostility and aggression that is still in place today, 43 years later.

Terrorist attacks and sabotage against Cuba began as early as 1959. The first mercenary gangs were organized and heavily armed but were fiercely resisted, and dealt a stunning timely blow just weeks before their planned invasion. On April 15, our airbases suffered an aerial attack from American warplanes flying under the Cuban insignia and piloted by mercenaries. On April 17 these same US-

trained and armed mercenaries invaded the Bay of Pigs under U.S. air cover.

In the rearguard, close to the Cuban shores, an American squadron waited in full gear, ready to act. Violent combats raged day and night on the 17th, 18th and 19th. The invaders were utterly defeated. The victory was so unexpected and complete that not even a beachhead or the necessary time was left for the government of the United States to offer support.

The UYC's official inception occurred between the Bay of Pigs invasion and the October Crisis of 1962 that took the world to the brink of a nuclear war. Our eternally heroic people did not surrender, nor retreat, nor concede a single millimeter of their ideas or principles. It was at this tense and glorious moment, that our combative youth stepped ahead as an organized force and a bulwark of our nation.

The name of the organization was much debated but I did not hesitate for a second to recommend to the Congress of the Young Rebels Association that concluded on April 4 that it be named the Union of Young Communists. (Applause) This name clearly defines our objectives and our dreams: to create the most fraternal and human society imaginable, where all forces and all resources are devoted to the service of humankind. I have never regretted suggesting that beautiful name. (Applause)

I am aware that a perfect society is still distant in our troubled and threatened world. But we have had at least the privilege of bearing witnesses to the social and political conquests that humans are capable of, to their heroic deeds. What admirable courage and tenacity! What a capacity to struggle, resist and multiply their strengths in the most adverse conditions!

This 40th Anniversary of the UYC comes at a time when our people are engaged in the greatest battle of ideas that could be waged in such a crucial phase for our homeland and for the whole of humanity, never forgetting the most beautiful, revolutionary and noble phrase ever said: "Humanity is Homeland." (Applause)

Our battle of ideas is not merely about principles, theories, knowledge, culture, arguments, replies and counter-replies; not merely about destroying lies and sowing the seeds of truth; it is about concrete actions and realizations. Even in the Special Period, under the blockade and under the hostility and threats of the most powerful empire the world has ever known, our people are designing and building the most just and human society ever seen. We are fully aware of this. The youth, the students and our splendid children are in the vanguard of this marvelous campaign and for this reason our optimism and hope for the future grow stronger every day.

I admire and dearly love the youth of yesterday and today, and I envy the youth of tomorrow. It is as if I could already see them looming over the horizon, although it is almost impossible to imagine how our country and our people will be, what our youth and our children will be like, how full their lives will be when the accumulation of knowledge, culture, creativity and truly fraternal and human sentiments make the dreams of our noble struggle come true.

Forward, dear Cuban youth!

Forward, dear students!

Forward, dear children!

The world will be entirely yours.

Long live the future! (Shouts of "the future!")

Long live socialism! (Shouts of "socialism!")

Long live the homeland! (Shouts of "the homeland!")

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(Standing ovation)

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