

# The Italian Election

## Result and What It Means

By Hiram Moderwell  
in the London Dreadnaught.

FOR three weeks before the Italian elections in the week of December 6, the Socialist daily, *Avanti*, made its daily full-page headline something about Russia. This was to tell its readers that the only issue on which it was contesting the election was the Russian Revolution—the world Revolution. But a corollary to this was the condemnation of imperialistic war, especially victorious imperialistic war, like the one just—pardon, not yet, ended. So its sub-headline was usually about the war. No one who voted the Socialist ticket in Italy was in the dark concerning what his vote meant. It meant, so far as a parliamentary vote can mean anything, a vote against the war and in favor of the world Revolution.

On this platform the Socialists increased their representation in the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 42 to 156, nearly quadrupling their number of deputies, and attaining almost a third of the next Italian parliament. What is more important, in fact, the only thing in this election which the Socialists considered important at all, they increased their popular vote from 900,000 in 1913, to something more than two millions and a half.

When the campaign opened, it required faith and courage to "play up" Soviet Russia in headlines. It appeared at that time that Petrograd was about to fall. Yudenitch was in the very suburbs of the city, and one could only judge from the dispatches that the Russian transportation system had broken down, and that Trotsky had been unable to ship supplies to his northern army. At the same time Denikin was less than 200 kilometers from Moscow. Poland was pushing ahead from the west, and Finland seemed about to intervene. The Baltic States had broken off their peace negotiations with the Bolsheviks. The British Admiralty had made what appeared to be an official announcement of the fall of Kronstadt to the British warships, a loss to Russia which could never have been retrieved. Even Koltchak seemed to be successfully resisting the Bolshevik attacks.

Then, with one of those marvelous turns of fortune which occur but a few times in history, the situation suddenly cleared. Yudenitch was driven back, Finland refused to intervene, the Ukrainians mobilised in Denikin's rear, Kronstadt proved to be safe, Poland and the Baltic States made definite efforts toward peace with Russia, Denikin was hurled back, Kieff fell, and then Omsk. All this was known on the occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet Russia, and the Italian workers had a week in which to draw the moral.

I can testify that the results of the election far surpassed the hopes of the Socialists. In all those parts of Italy in which the masses of the people can read and write, the vote was pretty consistently 50 per cent Socialist. Rome, the nest of the petty bureaucracy, and one of the weakest Socialist cities, gave a plurality for the Socialists for the first time in its history. The province of Rome, in which clerical influences are strong, gave the Catholics only 5,000 votes more than the Socialists. Venetia, which had been invaded by the enemy, and which had been counted on to give a tremendous vote to the patriotic party, gave a clear majority to the

Socialists over all the other parties combined. The industrial cities, like Milan, Turin and Alessandria, and the Romagna provinces around Bologna, went Socialist by an enormous majority. All the districts north of Rome, save three out of four, gave a Socialist plurality.

All but a handful of the yellow Socialists were defeated. In Genoa, Guilietti edged in with his yellow "Party of Labor," thanks to his enormous popularity as secretary of the Seamen's Union; but his confrere, Canepa, one of the men who presumed to represent the Italian working class at the Lucerne conference in August, was defeated. Naples, in which Socialist organization has always been weak, elected, it is true, the patriotic

## Aim in One Direction

By Karl Liebknecht

UNITY! Who else is seeking and striving for it as much as we are? For the unity which will give the proletariat the power to accomplish its historic mission?

But not every unity makes for power. Unity between fire and water will extinguish the fire and convert the water into vapor; unity between wolf and sheep means that the sheep will be devoured by the wolf; unity between the proletariat and the ruling class means that the proletariat will be offered up as a sacrifice; unity with traitors spells defeat.

Only forces which aim in one direction can be strengthened through unity; to amalgamate forces headed in different directions is to weaken them.

What we endeavor to do is to unite the forces which aim in the same direction. But to unite divergent forces is to create weakness and to eliminate the driving forces of the revolution. This is what the apostles of unity are looking for, just like the preachers of unity during the war.

POLITICS IS ACTION. That the action shall be unified and the forces shall operate in the same direction, a unity is required in regards to the road and the aim. Whosoever agrees with us about the road and aim is a welcome comrade for the struggle.

—Translated by M. G.

Socialist Labriola. But with him it elected two official Socialists, one of them Francesco Misiano, discharged from the government railway service for strike activities, condemned to prison for anti-militarist activities, deserter from the army, arrested in Switzerland for revolutionary propaganda, arrested again in Berlin for Communist activities during Spartacist week, and now in prison.

The Clericals, with their thousands of permanent party organizers in the persons of its priesthood, came out much weaker than had been expected. This is the more remarkable since they offered a programme of land distribution and taxation of wealth, which was designed to catch all those workers and timid Socialists who still fear the word "Bolshevism."

Everywhere the patriotic party, the imperialists, those who want to make a meal of the Balkans in the next ten years, were defeated. In nearly every district they came at the bottom of the list. And this in spite of the fact that they offered a programme of internal reform still more radical than

that of the Clericals. In all they have scarcely more than 30 seats in the coming parliament.

The remainder of the seats, some 215 out of 508, go to the dozens of local groups which are called by the capitalist papers the "parties of law and order." But these have no national organization and no program which they dare announce. They cannot unite on any single point, and even if they had a clear majority in the chamber they could not form a government.

What, then, will the next government be like? Let us leave the answer to those guessers to whom it matters. The next government will be formed as all previous ones have been, pussyfooting and bribes, and conferences behind closed doors. It will have as little clear policy as the one now departing unmourned.

The newspapers are having their silly season over the results of this election. They are, in fact, more nervous than they have been since the general strike of July. They note with anxiety that the news caused the exchange to drop, and they fear that the new political situation will make it more difficult for Italy to obtain favors from the Great Council in Paris.

They deplore the fact that the conservatives were split, and that they had no national organization with which to oppose the Socialists. They forget the fact that party combinations would have no effect on the Socialist representation under the new system of proportional representation which they themselves created in an effort to make their democracy "pure." They point enviously to the results in France, in which, as a result of such combinations, the Socialists lost two score or more of their seats. But they forget to mention that the French Socialists increased their vote from 700,000 to 1,700,000, and that increase in popular strength is the only thing a revolutionary party cares a straw about.

The wiser of these papers understands, however, that the election does mean a change of front on the part of bourgeois Italy. "L'Epoca," which is from time to time a ministerial organ, points out that the result of the election will alienate Italy still more from the western powers, which have been far from sisterly toward her hitherto. They assert that Italy must in the future look for her necessary supplies of coal, of oil, and of wheat, not from England and America, but from Russia. Yes, from Soviet Russia! These papers accept the fact that the Allied intervention in Russia has failed, that Communist Russia is going to live. They openly say that economic and semi-diplomatic relations with Russia must be opened at the earliest opportunity.

And yet these bourgeois leaders are not so panic-stricken at the Socialist victory as foreigners might suppose. They do not worry too much over the fact that a third of their new legislative body is composed of avowed revolutionists pledged to oppose and obstruct at every turn, pledged to preach only the Communist Republic, and to organize a violent Revolution at the earliest opportunity.

Why this strange blindness? It is not blindness. These politicians have not been (Turn to next page).