

# IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR

## Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

### The Party and the French Elections

#### Right Wing Renegades Exploit the Mistakes of the Stalinist Bureaucrats

The first and second ballots of the elections constitute important moments of the political life in France, creating a new situation, throwing light upon the strength of the various parties participating and upon the tendencies in the broad masses in view of the crisis and the consequences flowing from it for them.

The elections showed most clearly the movement of the masses toward the conditions, to cast off the burden of the "left", that is, their desire to better their state as imposed upon them through the tremendous military and police apparatus; their desire to do away with the danger of war which is very prominent in their eyes. All these deep-seated aspirations of the masses led to the victory of the so-called "left" parties, the Radical-Socialists and the socialists, over the Tardieu government, which represented in the view of the masses those forces to which they were opposed.

What will the new majority bring about? A coalition government or a bloc? A coalition of the democratic parties revolving about the Radical party and excluding the Marin group (nationalists) and the socialists or a bloc of the United Left in power following in the footsteps of the bloc in the electoral campaign? In general, it may be said that French capitalism, and among its political formations, the Radicals in the first place, would prefer the first solution.

Far from becoming ameliorated, the perspectives are growing more sombre, the crisis is continuing to deepen. In order to make the proletariat and the laboring masses bear the burden, the bourgeoisie feels the need of broadening the base of the government and the coalition would correspond to this necessity. On the other hand, the socialist leaders are not very enthusiastic about participating in the power at the present moment, when there are great difficulties. The unanimous election of the new President bears witness to this orientation of French capitalism toward the coalition. It has shown in a clear fashion who will be the master by deciding on a man who has no qualifications other than that of being the representative of the *Comitee des Forges* (the powerful syndicate of French industrial imperialism) ever since he has been in politics. However, sharp contradictions clash with each other within the bourgeois camp and the wave which has brought victory at the same time to both the Radicals and the socialists is so strong that it is not improbable that for a short lapse of time a government bloc may be in power.

But no matter which of these solutions will be adopted, the essence of the election results consists in this: that the masses, today deluded by the left parties, will shortly be disillusioned with regard to the false promises the latter have made them. This opens up great perspectives for the Communist party, provided that within the months which separate us from this break, it assures its attachment to the masses by an appropriate policy. If this does not come about, the bourgeois Right wing will give an opportunity to exploit the disillusionment of the masses, in the first place to the disadvantage of the proletariat and its class party. Within the party, there exists the belief that when the masses will be disillusioned they will automatically come to us. That is an infantile conception; it suffices to look at the example of Germany and Great Britain, where the party has been unable to benefit from the reformist impotence on the one hand, and from their treachery, on the other.

The present relations of the Communist party to the class working are disclosed by the elections. First of all, it must be said without any embellishments that the party met with one defeat in the first ballot and with another in the second ballot.

The first ballot reveals a decline of 300,000 votes over 1928. In *L'Humanite* of May 3, the party leadership attempts to play this up as a victory. "We believe, on the other hand, that the results of last Sunday testify to a fine victory for our party." How? Because we are supposed to have made gains in some industrial centers and because—this is said in all seriousness—if the elections had taken place a year ago or two years ago, we would have suffered an even greater decline due to the workings of the "Barbe group."

First of all, it is not true in general that we have made gains in the industrial regions. That is true only for a very small number of wards in the Pas-de-Calais, in Donaisis, and in other isolated sections. But as a whole, we have suffered losses. Losses in the Parisian region, in Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, in the Seine Inférieure region, in Alsace, in the Aube, in Lyons, etc., etc. This is a decline that must be taken into account.

As to the second argument, it is simply contemptible. There were attempts

\* See the article "Political Banditry in the French Communist Party", in *The Militant* of December 5, 1931—Ed.

made to use this argument about the "Barbe group" last year, they did not dare brandmark it until the party congress. Do they think they will have better success today?

But if the party is just about to overcome its decline, then this should have been expressed in the second ballot on May 8. The Communist workers and sympathizers should have shown that they understand and approve of its policy. Was this the case? The day following the first ballot, *L'Humanite* stated peremptorily: "300,000 voters deeply convinced of the correctness of our policy and our class against class tactic" (May 3). But the second ballot disproved this assertion. The tactic of "class against class", that is, the retention of the party candidates in every case on the second ballot, even where the socialist candidate had received the majority of the workers' votes, was not followed by about 50 percent of those who voted Communist on the first ballot. In some cases, the losses are relatively small, in others they reach 70 and even 80 percent. Let us add that the same phenomenon can also be observed with regard to the Radical candidates. Consequently, experience proves superabundantly and even better than in 1928 that the so-called "class against class" tactic is not accepted by the mass of the Communist voters. It is not at all astonishing, moreover, that it arouses the reformist workers against us.

There are more things to be taken into account. First of all, the success of the P. U. P. (*Parti d'Unité Proletarienne*—the party of Sellier and Co., the Right wing expelled from the French C. P.), particularly in the Parisian region. This fact alone, more than the loss of votes, constitutes a defeat for the party. Here are people who have no other program than that of struggle against the C. P. which originally boosted them and elected them to office. They merely conducted a campaign of disgusting slanders against the party. As a result, they have been elected. To be sure the bourgeoisie has aided them, but it is indisputable that workers gave their vote to them, who only yesterday voted for the party. It is an insult to the very proletarians to claim that personal favors have sufficed to assure these successes. Personal favors have assured Sellier and others a local apparatus but they have obtained workers' votes then because the party has not been able to unmask them because the party did not expel them on a political basis clearly understood by the workers, because it has restricted itself to shouting and has not been able to convince the workers. In order to realize the difference in methods and policies of the party today from that of ten years ago, it suffices to recall that a Frossard, when he was expelled, was forced to seek a seat in a distant provincial constituency, whereas a Gellis can today get himself elected in the 13th, *arrondissement* in Paris (an old Communist stronghold.)

Another thing that must be taken into account, is the fact that most of the elected candidates of the party were elected with the support of socialist voters. It must be admitted that the slogans of the socialist party, declining either in favor of the Radical party or the Communist party, were followed by the very great majority of the socialist voters. And it is therein that we find the successes of the socialists, perhaps even more than in the number of votes they received. The socialists did not, by the way, refrain from giving their motives for withdrawing in favor of the Communist candidates; not because of their sympathy or affinity is to the case with the Radicals, but in order to better be able to win over the workers at present under Communist influence, to their side. What a fine lesson for our centrists! The socialists do not fear to compromise themselves by favoring our party by voting for some of our candidates on the second ballot. They hope, in this manner, to take away another big layer of the working class from the party. This will not remain a hope for them if our party persists in the path which it is taking at present.

Everybody expected the defeats of the party. When it conducts a policy which isolates the party from the masses, which weakens its positions in the trade unions and the workers' organizations, it is inevitable that losses should follow in the elections. This is once more, payment for all the past mistakes, for the "third period", for the "red days", for the "political mass strikes", for "unity within the C. G. T. U." etc. All these mistakes, the enemies of the party have been able to exploit with signal successes. The elections have showed what we have contended day for day, that it is not enough to cry about the reformist betrayals to convince the workers; it is also necessary to show them that we are better capable than the reformists of fighting for their immediate demands, if the latter are not to retrain their influence among the workers. There is the example of Roubaix-Tourcoing (the scene of last year's textile strikes) where the reformists have gained votes, there is the example of Vienne, where the party in addition made the mistake of putting up

a bureaucrat, a certain Richetta, for election, instead of a worker victim of the bosses reprisals following the strikes. But the number of votes received proves that the methods of the C. G. T. U. leadership have been condemned by the workers, who in their disgust fall under the influence of the reformists.

The lesson to be drawn, is the necessity of a radical change of policy. And above all, no half-measures, no ruses.

#### Nine Years of the Struggle of the Left Opposition

### The Anglo-Russian Committee and the British General Strike

The crushing defeats suffered by the German proletariat in October 1923, by the Bulgarians in September of the same year, and by the Estonians early in 1924, were dealt with by the delegates and the leaders of the Fifth Congress of the Comintern like so many transient episodes. Far from attempting to analyze the new situation that had developed as a result of these defeats, the leaders of the Fifth Congress, who had failed to see the revolutionary situation in Germany when it was rising before their very noses, now proclaimed that the armed struggle was only just ahead. After the German defeat had disclosed the beginning of a new and different situation, the Comintern leaders declared that "Europe is entering into the stage of decisive events... Germany is apparently approaching a sharp civil war" (Zinoviev, February 2, 1924) or "It is false that the decisive struggles have already been fought, that the proletariat has suffered a defeat in these struggles and the bourgeoisie has grown stronger as a result" (Stalin, September 20, 1924). The fact that a "democratic pacifist period" had begun, that the bourgeoisie had succeeded (on the basis of the Comintern's defeats) in achieving a temporary "stabilization", was vigorously denied by the Comintern spokesmen, and was only acknowledged by them a year and a half afterward, when the facts were already matters of indisputable record, and when the situation was again turning in a new direction.

#### The Swing to the Right

But in the period of calling a non-revolutionary period a revolutionary period, the apparatus people were compelled to hunt high and low for the faintest revolutionary manifestation, to exaggerate it all out of proportions, or even to manufacture revolutionary phenomena where they really did not exist. By inventions and exaggerations, they sought a justification for their prognosis which the actual course of the class struggle did not provide. That is, consequently, the period in which the most fantastic "victories" of the Comintern were heralded to the world, serving to deceive and bewilder the masses in general and the Communists in particular, and to lay the basis for the long swerve to the Right which marked the Comintern's policy until 1928. It was during this period that the shrewd bourgeois politician, Raditch of Yugo-Slavia, was hailed in Moscow and abroad as the great peasants' leader. This was the period in which every demagogue and scoundrel who required some rosy coloring in order to preserve his leadership over the masses, could get it without difficulty by applying to the Comintern apparatus. Raditch was not the only one. The kulak farmers of the American Northwest were hailed in Moscow as the next thing to Communists, as the inestimable partner in the notorious Farmer-Labor party movement. Macia, the head of the Catalan petty bourgeoisie, was transported to Moscow for negotiations. Delegates from the Kuo Min Tang participated officially in the deliberations of the Communist International. They were prominent figures, together with the ragtag and bobtail of petty bourgeois politicians from India to London and back, in the famous "Anti-Imperialist League." The so-called "Peasants International" was formed at that time, to embrace every political exploiter of the peasantry who needed the protection of "Moscow", and to advance the unique slogan: "The emancipation of the peasantry is the work of the peasantry itself!"

Not the least prominent of the figures who made their pilgrimage to Moscow in those days were the leaders of the British trade unions, Purcell and Co., who visited the Soviet Union at the end of 1924 as an official delegation. The offensive of the British bourgeoisie against the workers' standard of living was producing radical changes in the ranks of the proletariat, a more militant mood was already visible among them, they were moving towards the Left, and this process was reflected in the trade union leadership by the development of a "Left" wing, Purcell, Hicks, Swales, Cook and others, who found it easier to maintain their reactionary leadership over the masses by swinging out to the Left with them.

Out of this visit to Russia, the favorable report which the delegation published, the impression made by the Russian trade union delegation to Comintern, was born the Anglo-Russian Committee, representing the Councils of the two trade union centrals. Its original ob-

After being so steeped in error, after accumulating such a string of mistakes, after so much self-discreditation, after sowing such a distrust among the workers, it is necessary, not to spout words, but to act in a decisive, courageous and persevering manner to bring about a change in this whole situation. It will not do to repeat turns like those of 1930 and 1931, which are finally revealed to be nothing but petty deception. It is necessary to carry out a genuine turn. The militants in the party will have to take up this task in spite of the bureaucrats, who are much more concerned about their personal prestige than about the necessities of revolutionary policy.

—LA VERITE.

### The I.L.P. and British Communism

In the last few months, the question of the attitude of the party towards the Independent Labor Party has occupied the attention of the party and the C. I. The absence of a clear policy on this matter has led to frequent disasters: the bloc with the 'Left' reformists from 1925-1927, the support of the Maxton, Cook movement of 1928, and the confusion on this question as recent as last Autumn, all these blunders are due to the essential weaknesses in the policy of the leadership of the C. I. and the British Party. Today, after they burned their fingers

many times, the party declares on order from the C. I. that between it and the I. L. P. there is "war to the death". A very noisy resolution signifying absolutely nothing.

The resolution issued by the C. I. and accepted by the party leadership last January declares that during the struggle of last September one could only notice the slightest difference between the party and the I. L. P. This fact, which is due to the "Left" reformist policy pursued by the party in the time prior to and during last year's crisis, was pointed out by party members among whom this viewpoint was stifled and denounced. Now that one can perceive it, what is the remedy? As for the party leadership, it is "war to the death". But such an attitude reflects only a weak revolutionary policy, whereas a clear demarcation between the policy of the C. P. and that of the I. L. P. makes such declarations superfluous. The difference is clear in itself. The revolutionary party has a special role to fulfill and between it and "left" reformism there is a great difference, but the leadership of the party is afraid of repeating its past errors and lumps together the leaders of the Labor Party, those of the I. L. P. and at the same time, those workers in the ranks of the I. L. P. who are orientating themselves towards a revolutionary policy, and calls them all "social fascists".

#### What Is the I. L. P.

The I. L. P. occupies a rather important position in the British working class movement, not because it has a formidable following, but because the impotence of the party has fortified the idea among the workers that it is becoming a real center of opposition against the Labor Party. On the other hand it has a large number of individual adherents, and especially of late, it is attracting those young workers who are entering the movement for the first time.

Until now the I. L. P. has always been a reform party. It has grown with the neo-trade unionism of the unskilled workers and has played a big role in pushing large masses of workers towards an independent workers' policy. The social democratic federation which characterized itself as Marxian but which Engels repudiated as sectarian, failed in this task; the I. L. P. was infected by the doctrines of radical liberalism and based its socialism on ethical conceptions and not on Marxism. Consequently it grew as a reformist party organized on this basis and it never has been otherwise. During the war it adopted the pacifist point of view, and after the war it continued to support the Labor Party and the leadership of MacDonald who up to several months ago was a member of the I. L. P. Its differences with the Labor Party began in actuality to manifest themselves during the last Labor Government. But these were always differences in words only; behind all the criticism was always to be found the implied support of the Labor Government.

But in the ranks of the I. L. P. the criticism had an effect which tended to carry it beyond the realm of words, and toward the struggle for a break with reformism. The young members criticized the Labor Party leaders more and more and had little inclination to be satisfied with parliamentary maneuvers. This year we have seen the growth of unofficial committees constituted to bring about a repudiation of the reformist doctrines and to work for the adoption of a revolutionary policy by the I. L. P. The I. L. P. leaders immediately transformed this movement into one for a formal break with the Labor party and the principal discussion has been for or against the breaking off of relations with the Labor Party. The leaders of the I. L. P. asked for the right to vote in the communes according to the dictates of their conscience. The Labor party refuses this right and on such a question these revolutionary leaders spend hours of babbling, filling the columns of newspapers and holding record-breaking meetings!

The Party must struggle against such leaders but it should distinguish between them and the members who are trying to point the way toward a revolutionary policy. Nevertheless the party adopts an attitude which signifies in reality "all those outside our ranks are enemies of the working class" an attitude which makes it impossible for the Party to win over the most militant sections within the reformist ranks.

The British Left Opposition group is fighting against this policy; it demands that the party while showing the weaknesses of the policy advanced by the unofficial committees; for example, their inability to give clear expression to the relation between the present struggles of the workers and the struggle for power, their lack of understanding of the role of a revolutionary party in the daily struggles and in the struggle for power, their equivocal statements on the subjects of civil war; should be ready to struggle with them against the I. L. P. leaders and on questions of the daily struggle. Already some progress has been made in this direction and several I. L. P. militants have been won over to the support of the viewpoint of the Left Opposition.

On this question as on others members of the Left Opposition in England will carry on a consistent struggle against the false policy of Stalinism.

—ANGLICUS.

radical representative. Yet this committee was not only touted around the world by the Comintern apparatus, but the most extravagant virtues and aims were attributed to it. In July 1926, Stalin declared that the task of the Committee was "the organization of a broad movement of the working class against new imperialist wars in general and against an intervention in our country, especially on the part of England, the mightiest of the imperialist states of Europe." In the same spirit, the official theses of the Moscow party committee announced that "The Anglo-Russian Committee can and will undoubtedly play an enormous role in the struggle against all possible interventions directed against the U. S. S. R."; and further—something we always thought the Comintern alone could be: "it will become the organizational center that embraces the international forces of the proletariat for the struggle against every endeavor of the international bourgeoisie to begin a new war."

These two quotations suffice to plumb the depths of the Stalinist conception of the A. R. C. The Committee was no longer a temporary bloc with limited, concrete, immediate aims corresponding to the daily interests of the proletariat in a given situation. It had become, or "will become" the organizing center of the proletariat against imperialist war and intervention against the U. S. S. R. In this manner, the Stalinist course in the Anglo-Russian Committee only follow consistently from the reactionary conception of "socialism in one country". According to it, Russia could build up its own nationally isolated socialist economy, "if" only foreign intervention could be staved off. With this in mind, an idea that must end in converting the Comintern into a Soviet border patrol, came the hunt for "anti-interventionists". The "trade union bloc" with Purcell and the other trade union bureaucrats quickly became a political bloc between the reformists of England and the Russian party bureaucracy, not for a moment, but for a long period of time. The Opposition, on the contrary, which had never conceived the Committee as anything but a momentary agreement with the British labor leaders on a limited basis, as a step in mobilizing the reformist masses behind the Communists, declared: "The more acute the international situation becomes, the more the A. R. C. will be transformed into a weapon of English and international imperialism."

Theories are the condensed generalizations of preceding experience. They are verified not only by the past but by the present and the future, because events do not merely repeat themselves, but repeat themselves in a different manner and under different circumstances. Let us see how the two conceptions stood the test of events.

(Continued in next issue)  
—MAX SHACHTMAN.

### Strikes and Repression in Spain

(Continued from page 1)

Spain a strike movement has broken out with renewed vigor. In the city of Seville a general strike is in progress. According to the latest press reports it seems to be mounting in militancy. Police and Civil Guards are at hand in full force and Governor of Seville states, threatens to "burn the 202 churches of Seville." We learn from the incomplete reports in the capitalist newspapers that there has been an almost complete shutdown of the industries of Seville. And its effectiveness in keeping out strikebreakers is attested to, in one instance, by the fact that soldiers had to man the bakeries.

At the same time this latest outbreak is not local in scope. In Cadiz there were head on clashes between strikers and police. Strike cars, taxi service, shippings and aeroplane factories were completely paralyzed by the strike in that city. In Madrid, Catalonia and other places rioting of a similar nature occurred. The repercussions of this movement were felt as far as Algeria where shooting took place on the streets of Algiers in the course of a protest strike against the arrest of several syndicalist workers.

It is also reported that this is part of a nation wide monarchist conspiracy to restore Alfonso to the throne. While we can conceive of the possibility of such an attempt in view of the recent pronouncements of the Bourbons we are a little sceptical of such dispatches.

The Stalinists and the A. R. C. Purcell only typified the English half of the A. R. C.; he was even its most