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Radicals Hold Whip Hand In French People's Front

The Meaning of the French Elections

By JOHN WEST

COLD and sober analysis is necessary in order to estimate at their true value the results of the French elections. Demagogues, liberals, and reformists are at liberty to spin out dreams and illusions; it is the business of Marxists to base their theoretical and practical conclusions on an understanding of reality. If we were to accept the Stalinist account of the French elections, we would now believe that the danger of Fascism in France has passed, that the crisis in France is in a position to be solved rapidly and tranquilly under the benign aegis of the People's Front majority. Unfortunately, we remember other Stalinist accounts of other events: We remember how, in the autumn of 1932, the decline in the Nazi vote in Germany proved to the satisfaction of the Comintern analysts that the power of Hitler was broken and would soon disappear; and how, in March, 1933, it was so stirringly prophesied by these same brave augurs that Hitler could not remain in power longer than a bare six months.

A glance at the bourgeois press during the past few days might alone be enough to cause a doubt or two to begin with. The Wall Street Journal records itself as well satisfied with the outcome. The Times notes that little difficulty is to be expected from sudden changes in French foreign policy, since all of the French political parties have based their programs on solid proposals for strong national defense. The New York Evening Post, in a long editorial, notes that the elections were a great blow both at fascism "and at communism." Ludwig Lore, in his Post column, in the midst of his song of victory, pauses parenthetically to observe that the program of the People's Front is no more radical than Roosevelt's New Deal. In France itself, the "repudiated" premier, Sarraut, was so overwhelmed—as not to find it necessary even to resign.

What has changed in France? What is the significance of these elections?

Without doubt, the elections record the movement further to the left of large sections of the French proletariat and the lower peasantry. This is marked sufficiently by the spectacular increase in the Communist vote, and the substantial increase in the Socialist vote, making the representation of the latter party the largest in the new Chamber. This, in turn, is a symbol of the deeper process which has been unfolding in France during the past three years: the gradual cleavage of the French population into the two mighty divisions of the basically opposing class forces.

But, first and last in commenting upon these elections, it must be observed that the increase in the votes of the working-class parties occurred at the expense not of the Right but of the Center—of the Radical Socialist and the lesser petty-bourgeois parties. The parties of the Right, far from losing strength, actually gained more than twenty seats in the new Chamber. Thus, even on the electoral field, we find on examination that the "mighty blow to reaction" turns out to be the hallucination of bureaucratic minds: the Right emerges from the elections not weaker but stronger.

The increase in the votes of the working-class parties, as well as the increase on the Right was, then, accomplished at the expense of the parties of the Center, above all of the Radical Socialists. The Radical Socialist Party, for many years the largest parliamentary party in France, will enter the new Chamber with approximately twenty fewer representatives than the Socialist Party. Thus these elections demonstrate incontrovertibly the truth of the Marxist prediction that under the impact of the process of basic class differentiation the petty-bourgeois parties of the Center must necessarily disintegrate, their following sifting out into one class division or the other. The relations in the Chamber do not, however, indicate by any means the full extent of the disintegration of the Radical Socialists. Further evidence is provided by the fact that many of the most popular traditional leaders of the Radical Socialists—including Herriot himself—failed to secure election in the first day of voting, and were returned on the second ballot only with the support of the Communists and Socialists; and in a number of cases lost out altogether.

The disintegration of the Radical Socialists is both symbol and proof of the fact that the crisis in France is too deep to permit of solution along the customary lines of modern French politics. For decades the French bourgeoisie has maintained its social and economic dictatorship through the utilization of the Radical Socialists as its chief governmental agents. The Radical Socialist leaders, in turn, maintained the support of their mass petty-bourgeois following for French imperialism. But today the results of the profound and continuing economic depression and the approach of the new war demand a sterner answer. The alternative is posed to France: Fascism or Socialism; and the alternative is inescapable. Thus the voice of the Radical Socialist preachers of "the middle way" is lost in the rising social tumult. And their following slips out of their hands, to the right and to the left.

It is in the light of this process of differentiation that the strategy of the People's Front policy must be judged. And, so judged, it is seen to be precisely the betrayal of the revolutionary struggle which the realities of French society places on the order of the day. Nothing could make this clearer than the recent elections. The Radical Socialist Party, its policies and its leadership, stand discredited before the French masses. Its policies have led to nothing but disaster; its leaders have been openly shown to be shot through with every form of corruption and venality. And, at just the time when this is becoming apparent to the consciousness of the masses, the working-class

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Their Aid is Vital to S. P. and C. P. Plans

Social Patriotic Policies Hold Sway in New Left Coalition

The final results of the run-offs in the French elections gave 380 seats out of a total of 618 to the parties participating in the so-called People's Front. In the old Chamber these same parties held 304 seats out of 611.

The Communist Party scored the largest and seemingly most sensational gains, adding 62 seats, and increasing its total in the Chamber to 72. The Socialist Party gained 53 seats, increasing its representation to 146, and replacing the Radical Socialists, who dropped from 151 to 116, as the largest single party in the Chamber. Of the remaining "left" parties, Paul Boncour's Socialist and Republican Union received 26 seats (losing 13); the Independent Socialists received 9 seats (a loss of 2); and the dissident communists kept the 10 seats they had in the previous Chamber.

What the Gains Mean

It should be noted that the sevenfold increase in the Communist representation does not correctly reflect the gains of this party on the electoral arena. Its popular vote was about double that of the 1932 elections. The reason for the small C. P. delegation in the old Chamber was largely due to the refusal of the Stalinists to make any sort of electoral agreements with either the Socialists or the Radicals in 1932. As a result, the vote in many cases was split three ways, to the advantage of the Right and the Center parties.

Nor is the rise of the Socialist Party to supersede the Radicals properly speaking a surprise. The French general elections have been going "left" since 1924; and in

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Rubber Co's Grant Wage Increases

AKRON, Ohio, May 5.—Goodyear, Firestone, and Goodrich, the three titans of the world's rubber industry, early this week announced wage increases of from five to ten percent for all production workers.

It need not be imagined that these increases came from the compassionate hearts of the rubber barons whose capacity for good works and kind deeds is well known. They came because the big boys are quaking in their rubber boots before the demon of rampant unionism which the Goodyear strike has unleashed.

The full extent of this victory can be savored only by those persons acquainted with one of the most ruthlessly competitive of American industries. Traditionally at daggers drawn, the rubber barons sat down around a table and agreed unilaterally to the present increases.

Lingering Doubts Dispelled

If any lingering doubts existed in the skulls of the local barons, they had only to stand in their office windows last Sunday and watch phalanx after phalanx of Akron union labor parade through the downtown section. When the parade ended, 20,000 union workers had passed in review.

Heading the procession was the victorious Goodyear local of the United Rubber Workers. Marching in close order, with their yellow caps brilliant in the May sunshine, they stretched out for three full city blocks. Cries of derision broke constantly from the ranks, "Here's Litchfield's 600 union members!"

Each of the large rubber locals headed a division of the parade. At the front of the Goodrich local marched 300 members of the rifle club and drill team. Cheering little cries of "When you gonna use them guns, boys" came from the sidewalks. As the crack fire division marched by, the good-natured crowd yelled, "Sit down! Sit down!" This local also had a car towing a trailer piled with old tires

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Solidarity with Cuban Comrades!

Widespread Support Needed Against Reaction

On the first day of the General Strike of 1935 in Cuba, our comrade, Crescencio Freyre, leader of the Bakers' Union of Cuba, was seized by Batista's gunmen. They took him through all Havana and attempted to force him to pick out his comrades from among the strikers. He refused; and the gunmen took him to an open field and machine-gunned him to death, and left him there to rot.

Since then other comrades have been murdered; and others have died in Batista's dungeons. The restrained news report from Cuba, published in this issue, takes for granted a knowledge of the depth of the Cuban terror. Unfortunately, few American workers have any idea of the concrete conditions under which the Cuban working class struggles today. The NEW MILITANT has published what news has seeped out. The vigorous protest to President Roosevelt, circulated by the Non-Partisan Labor Defense, gave a succinct picture of the Cuban terror—the smashed unions, the outlawed political parties, the labor and progressive leaders assassinated or imprisoned, the dread rule of the "law of flight." Since we published the full text of that protest in our issue of January 11, the terror has gone on systematically.

The political prisoners and their families who are under the charge of the petty-bourgeois liberals and the I.L.D. receive financial aid from their international connections. So far, however, there has been almost no international aid for the prisoners adhering to the Havana Federation of Labor, the So-corro Obrero, and the Bolshevik-Leninist party. Every class-conscious worker is duty-bound to give financial aid to these victims and their families. Here it is not merely a case of international solidarity. It is a case of supporting the struggles of workers who bear far more than we do the common yoke of American imperialism.

We ask all our readers to send funds for Cuban political prisoners, in care of the Non-Partisan Labor Defense, 22 East 17 Street, New York City.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Max Shachtman's lecture has been postponed from Sun., May 17th, to Wed. May 20th at 8 P.M. The subject will be, "Earl Browder, the Man and His Books", the place, Irving Plaza Hall, Irving Place and 15th St.

Terror Reigns In F.D.'s Cuba

Progressives Triumph at Auto Workers Convention

Dillon-Green Machine Receive Smashing Defeat; Plan of Action Drafted

By JACK WILSON

SOUTH BEND, Ind., May 2.—A resurgence of the labor movement in the auto industry that has wide possibilities can be expected following the progressive actions taken here this week at the second convention of the United Automobile Workers of America.

Similar in many respects to the rubber workers' convention of last fall, the sessions brought forth many manifestations of what the thousands of auto workers are thinking, what unrest is sweeping through the factories and what course might be traveled in the coming period.

A decisive victory against the stupid and criminal policies of William Green, A. F. of L. president, who defended craft unionism at the convention, marked the opening session.

So well remembered were the two years of splitting, betrayal, autocratic control, and the other policies which nearly destroyed the labor movement in the auto industry for which Green and the majority of the executive board of the A. F. of L. were responsible, that the 215 delegates were unanimously opposed to Green's appointed president, Francis J. Dillon.

Green and Dillon Trowned

A lame defense by both Dillon and Green of their policies met with no sympathy or response. Every delegate was prepared to battle at any cost a continuation of the antiquated craft union policies. In face of such bitter opposition, Dillon and Green withdrew while the delegates cheered and cheered. The two men left repudiated, disgraced, failures in their effort to organize the auto industry because of their false policies.

It was highly significant that Green and Dillon made such a serious retreat, one that further impairs the already badly damaged reputation of the craft union dominated executive board of the A. F. of L. It indicates that their position has become so weak among workers in basic industry that they fear to make a fight for it!

Juliant progressives and the other delegates shouted and cheered in a wild scene of enthusiasm as

Homer Martin, vice-president, took the platform to act as temporary chairman. The union had won its autonomy!

Tasks Before the Convention

Two major tasks confronted the convention after the retreat of Green and Dillon; adoption of a progressive program which would afford a basis for building a powerful union and the selection of good leaders to carry out that program.

A program had been drawn up by a caucus of 140 delegates held a month previous to the convention. A steering committee of 12 was chosen at that time to lead the fight for its approval.

The program of this essentially progressive bloc who were advised by the Committee for Industrial Organization included: (1) the ending of the probationary period of the union with Dillon as president; (2) establishment of an industrial union within the confines of the A. F. of L. with the jurisdictional question to be carried to the A. F. of L. convention; (3) amalgamation of the independent unions such as the M.E.S.A. and the former Coughlinite-influenced union with the United Automobile Workers; (4) approval of a democratic constitution allowing all political liberties to membership; (5) and the Gorman Labor Party resolution which the Stalinists naturally had foisted upon the delegates; (6) an immediate organization drive.

The program carried in its entirety. Without an understanding of how each issue was carried, however, the program lacks much content in so far as accurate analysis is concerned.

The seating of the 37 militant Toledo delegates was the first question considered. Since the Dillon opposition was the main problem and he had left the convention, these delegates had little difficulty in obtaining recognition. Dillon had claimed Toledo had no charter and was an outlaw union since it refused last fall to bust the powerful union of 16 plants into separate locals. It had paid up its delinquent per-capita tax.

Although nearly all the delegates acted in a progressive manner by

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Hundreds Jailed and Tortured

Batista Attempts to Cover Up by Investigation

(Special to New Militant)

HAVANA, April 30.—The action of the Cuban Supreme Court and of the Congress, calling for an investigation of recent murders of bourgeois opponents of the Batista dictatorship, signals an effort by Batista to broaden the base of his support.

Any investigation made will be a farce, for the murders were committed by Batista's own gunmen. Batista hopes, however, to make peace with his bourgeois opponents. Having outlawed all the labor organizations and imprisoned nearly five thousand workers, sharecroppers and intellectuals, Batista wants to unite all the "respectable elements" of the population to maintain the status quo.

Cconciliation and White Terror

Batista's conciliatory gestures toward the opposition bourgeoisie go hand in hand with systematic continuance of the white terror. No day passes without someone being murdered. New hundreds are imprisoned for no other offense than attending labor meetings. Scores are tortured. Only strong young men can survive imprisonment in Cabana Fortress; older men die soon.

What is needed here, above all is a powerful defense movement. The kind of defense work known in America is a physical impossibility under the Batista dictatorship. For example, we used to employ lawyers for courtroom fights before the general strike of 1935; now there is not a lawyer left in the whole of Cuba who will accept the defense of a worker or radical for fear of government reprisal.

The real work of a defense movement, then, cannot be in the courtroom, but must begin with mass pressure on the authorities. This means meetings, lightning demonstrations, leaflets, underground literature, systematic diffusion of news to other countries, especially to the United States, a militant policy of mobilizing the ranks of the shattered unions and outlawed labor parties—all of which has been conspicuously absent for the past seven months or more.

Amnesty Committee Ineffective

The National Committee for Amnesty for Social and Political Prisoners has failed to act as the center for such a defense movement. In the past eight months, it has met but once, and then it came together at the call of the Bishop of Havana. Who called the Bishop of Havana? Who but the Stalinists? In all its months of existence, the Amnesty Committee has not issued a single leaflet. It has not called a single demonstration or even adopted a militant resolution. Its appeal has been mainly to the charitable mind of the bourgeoisie, the Catholic Church, the Masons and the Odd Fellows.

In other words, it has tried to immunize itself by spreading a cloak of respectability and legality about its actions. But the Bishop of Havana has long ago dropped away, as have the few Masons, Odd Fellows and other "good bourgeois." Despite all its respectability, it has felt Batista's fist. His soldiers broke up a meeting of the central committee held in a private home; twenty-two of the twenty-seven members were arrested, hauled to army posts and beaten with swords. Most of them were then sentenced (on a moral charge!) to prison sentences of six months and more.

Organizations Represented

Neither the Auténticos (party of former President Grau San Martín), or Young Cuba, ever joined the Amnesty Committee, although both were formally invited. The organizations comprising the Amnesty Committee fall into three groups:

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THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF THE U.S.S.R.

By Leon Trotsky

Behind the Kremlin walls work is going on to replace the Soviet constitution by a new one, which, according to the declarations of Stalin, Molotov and others, will be the "most democratic in the world." To be sure, doubts might be aroused by the procedure in which the constitution is being elaborated. Up to recently, there has been no mention of this great reform either in the press or at meetings. No one is acquainted with the draft of the constitution as yet. In the meantime, Stalin told the American interviewer Roy Howard, on March 1, 1936, that "we shall probably adopt our new constitution at the end of this year." Thus Stalin is informed exactly as to the date when this constitution will be adopted, about which the people still has practically no information. It is impossible not to conclude that the "most democratic constitution in the world" is being elaborated and introduced in a manner that is not entirely democratic.

Stalin confirmed to Howard, and through him also to the peoples of the U.S.S.R., that "according to the new constitution, the suffrage will be universal, equal, direct and secret."

The inequalities in suffrage rights in favor of the workers as against the peasants are to be abolished. Henceforth, obviously, not factories but citizens will vote: each one for himself. Once there are "no classes", then all members of society are equal. Individuals can

store their privileges. In proportion as the objective possibility for the exploitation of man by man disappears, all necessity for these temporary measures will likewise disappear, and the party will strive to narrow them down, and to completely abolish them" (our emphasis). These lines can no doubt serve to justify the refusal to "disenfranchise" in a society in which the possibility for exploitation has disappeared. But along with this the program demands the simultaneous abolition of "any restrictions whatsoever upon liberty." For the entry into socialist society is characterized not by the peasants being made equal with the workers, and not by returning the franchise to 3-5 percent of the citizens of bourgeois origin, but by the establishment of true liberty for 100 per cent of the population. With the abolition of classes, according to Lenin, and according to Marx, not only the dictatorship but also the state itself withers away. Stalin, however, has said nothing as yet about removing "restrictions upon liberty" either to Howard or to the peoples of the U.S.S.R.

Molotov hastened to Stalin's assistance, sad to say, not very profitably. In replying to a question of the Editor-in-Chief of *le Temps*, Molotov said, "Now not infrequently (?) there is already no need for those administrative measures which were employed formerly" but "the Soviet power must of

In explaining the reform, Pravda refers obscurely and not at all prudently to the party program written by Lenin in 1919, which does really state that, "... disenfranchisement and any restrictions upon whatsoever upon liberty are necessary solely as temporary measures of struggle against the attempts of the exploiters to maintain or to re-

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