

French Radicals Hold Whip Hand

The Meaning of the Elections in France

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parties form a bloc with the Radical Socialists—which puts forward as its program exactly the program of the Radical Socialists; which accepts as its outstanding leaders, both in and out of Parliament, these same repudiated Radical Socialist chiefs; and which in the elections throws the working-class vote over to the Radical Socialist candidates.

When every demand of history and every teaching of Marxism called for an open and intransigent revolutionary proletarian policy, for the hastening of the dissolution of the Radical Socialist party by resolutely drawing the lower strata of its following behind the proletarian ranks under the banner of a revolutionary program, the Stalinists and Socialists of France have, through the People's Front, been engaged in exhausting the energies of the proletariat for the sake of—slowing down the dissolution of the Radical Socialists, bolstering up their credit and prestige with the masses, salvaging their bankrupt program, and aiding them in their loyal task of preventing the preparations for revolutionary struggle.

The disillusionment of the petty-bourgeois masses with Radical Socialism will not be permanently altered by changing the name of Radical Socialism to the People's Front. Why should they pick up again what they have discarded merely for the sake of a pretty new label? Already, the elections show, they are in large numbers turning not to the left but to the right, where at least there are confident leaders to speak out boldly for a new road and a new solution. The continuation of the People's Front policy means that this trend of the petty bourgeoisie will necessarily continue and increase. When the blows of history strip off the new clothes of the People's Front to show more obviously the Radical Socialist skeleton beneath, it will lose what attractive power it now has for the petty bourgeoisie, and they will drift faster toward the fascist camp. The proletariat can win and hold the petty bourgeois masses only by drawing them in under its own revolutionary banner, never by creeping in under the tattered petty-bourgeois tent.

What has been changed in France by these elections, hailed by the swarm of liberals, reformists, and social-patriots as the dawn of France's salvation? Essentially, nothing. Even in the Chamber of Deputies, in spite of the electoral shift, the basic relations are unaltered. The Communist and Socialist parties together have only about 35% of the votes in the Chamber. Thus they can control legislation and governmental policy only with the assistance of the Radical Socialists, who have about 20%. But this means that all measures actually taken will have to be Radical Socialist measures, and that any type or variation of a People's Front government could be in practice only another Radical Socialist government. The Radical Socialists keep the same relative position which they held in the last Chamber.

In many important respects, the nominal majority of the People's Front taken together with the minority position of the working-class parties is an added danger rather than an improvement. For example, it enables the French bourgeoisie to carry through any social and economic measures which they see fit, from wage reductions to devaluation to war, and at the same time to slough off all responsibility for such measures on to the People's Front. In this way, the bourgeoisie can convincingly maintain before the French masses that the continuing and increasing ills from which they suffer are actually due to the People's Front and its inspirers, the working-class parties. Thus the basis is laid for unanswerable propaganda to weaken the mass standing and authority of Socialism and Communism, and to draw the petty bourgeoisie and even many layers of the working class to the only other road—to Fascism. It will be observed that it is the policy of the People's Front which has placed the working class parties in this equivocal and possibly fatal position. To date, in drawing up the balance sheet of the People's Front, the Socialist and Communist parties have paid out: revolutionary theory, revolutionary policies, revolutionary strategy; and have received: a paper majority for the People's Front—which is either no majority at all, or a majority for the Radical Socialists, since the majority can be maintained only at the whim and pleasure of the Radical Socialists. But such a majority, far from representing an asset, is only an additional liability, burdening the working class parties with all the heavy debts and crimes of Radical Socialism.

The election results do not alter by a hair's breadth the underlying causes of the French crisis. Unemployment, low wages, high costs, the increasing misery of the lower strata of the peasantry, high taxes, the threat of devaluation, the approach of war: these remain now as they were a month ago. And every year of modern history, especially every year since the last War, proves that the reformist schemes of the People's Front cannot change materially for the better a single one of them. Every lesson of our times teaches that they demand as the single possible answer: the workers' revolution and socialism.

And the French Fascists? Defeated by the parliamentary warriors of the People's Front? Buried beneath the clouds of ballots? The very conception is sufficiently ludicrous. The Fascists participated only to a small degree in the elections. For the most part, they swung their votes to the traditional Right parties, many of the leaders of which are more openly moving toward a Fascist position in recent months. Meanwhile, the ranks of the Fascists are intact. Their knives and revolvers and machine guns and armored cars and tanks and airplanes are safe and growing in number. Their influence in the army is mounting. They prepare systematically, in their own fashion, for the struggle ahead. And French finance-capital directs their progress, holding them temporarily in check from too precipitous action before it is needed. Finance-capital makes it its business to learn from history: and the lessons of Italy, Germany and Austria were not taught in vain. It knows that crucial political issues are not settled by ballots.

The proletariat of France will do well to follow such an example. Its basic struggle must be transferred from parliament to the streets and the countryside. The subordination of the proletariat to the program and tactics of the petty bourgeoisie through the People's Front must be resolutely broken. The People's Front itself must be smashed through, and in its place, to secure concerted and coordinated action, must be built the fighting united front of the workers, which will draw behind it the lower ranks of the petty bourgeoisie. The revolutionary slogans must be brought before the masses, and made concrete

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1932, the Socialists polled a popular vote almost equal to that of the Radicals. The electoral agreement between the Socialists and the Radicals on the second ballot worked to the advantage of the latter, and this cut down the Socialist representation in the Chamber, in 1932.

In commenting upon the results of the election, the Daily Worker remarks that the victory was "even greater than was expected." The Stalinists seem generally at a loss for superlatives to acclaim their "triumph." Thus, Gannes says shyly that the "tremendous, even smashing gains" scored in France are "comparable only to the Spanish election victory."

Comparison with Spanish Vote

From the standpoint of what the Stalinists acclaim as the "great gains for the French masses," to compare the Spanish election with the French is to hold a candle up to the sun. While it is true that proportionately the People's Front gained approximately the same majority in each country (56% of the total seats in Spain; 60% in France), the Spanish S.P. and C.U. combined obtained only a little over one-third of the seats carried by the People's Front as against almost two-thirds for the French S.P. and C.P. The combined popular vote of these two parties totaled 4,500,000 out of 10,000,000 votes cast. Then, too, the Spanish C.P. received less than 6% of the seats in the bloc as against almost 20% for the C.P. in France.

It is not difficult to prove that the results of the election come almost as a shock to the tub-thumpers for the People's Front.

Results Come as Shock

Leon Blum, in an interview issued to the French press, on the eve of the first ballot, "modestly foretold a gain of 20 seats for his own party, while giving the Communists 25, and the Radicals 15. . . He is convinced that the Radical group, the great middle class party, will remain in the largest in the Chamber." (The Manchester Guardian Weekly, April 24.)

In the Daily Worker analysis of the results of the first ballot we find: first, a boast of the "great victory"; secondly, a forecast of "from at least 40 and possibly 60 deputies" for the C.P.; and, finally, the following astounding prognosis:

"It is estimated that the French Socialist Party will obtain 80 seats in the next Chamber and the Radical Socialists will hold about 70." (D.W., April 28.)

We can either accept this news dispatch (allegedly from Paris) at its face value and conclude that the Daily Worker was merely insuring itself against all eventualities by howling victory on the first ballot and predicting a disastrous defeat for the People's Front in the run-offs; or we may assume that the bewildered hack who concocted the "Paris dispatch" had intended to give the Radicals, that "great middle class party" not 70 but 170 seats. The latter figure is the one prophesied for the Radicals by Blum, and also ventured as an estimate in the pages of L'Humanite.

Even after the run offs, the Daily Worker tended to be restrained almost to the verge of suspicion. Thus, under its screaming headline of May 4 which proclaimed "victory," the Stalinists carried the most conservative U.P. dispatch which gave the Communists "between 45 and 55 seats in the next parliament", and did not breathe a word about the possibility of the Radicals losing their dominant position to the Socialists.

Distressed at New Set-Up

The Stalinists get the jitters at the very thought of themselves or the Socialists, i.e. the "working class parties" having to oppose the Socialists face to face even on the parliamentary arena. According to the theory and practice of the People's Front, France can be saved from Fascism only provided that the "great party of the middle class" be interposed in power between the lawless Fascists and the law-abiding workers. The program of the People's Front is acceptable to Herriot-Daladier because it is the program of Herriot-Daladier. The banner of the People's Front is the tricolor: its hymn, the Marseillaise. That is why P. J. Philip can report with satisfaction the following:

"In estimating the degree of readiness of the new majority, it should be noted that at nearly all the electoral meetings, even the Communist ones, the Tricolor flag of the French Republic was used to form the centerpiece over the platform. . . The Marseillaise was sung as lustily as the 'Internationale', and these small mat-

ters are significant" (N.Y. Times, May 5).

The victory proved "unexpected" and even embarrassing to the Stalinists because they were anxious that the Radicals should be stronger in the new Chamber than the Socialists. But, as it turned out, "everybody" won except the true banner-bearers of the People's Front, the Radical Socialists.

The Daily Worker pretends it is pleased at the outcome, and explains the defeat of the Radicals as the defeat of the enemies of the People's Front: "The defeated Radical Socialists were the doubtful friends of democracy within the People's Front."

"The forces within the People's Front who dared flirt with the reactionaries, who voted for some of the pro-Fascist measures of ex-Radical Premier Pierre Laval, were decisively rebuked and rejected." (D. W., May 5).

Defeated Despite People's Front

The Stalinists conveniently forget to mention that those Radicals who went down to defeat, did so despite the support of the People's Front, i.e. of the Socialists and of the Communists. Far from "rebuking or rejecting" any Radical, even one openly hostile to the People's Front, the Stalinists sought to placate and elect every single one of them. As reported by M. E. Ravage in the Nation (April 29) the Stalinists rejected the proposal made by a Socialist member of the People's Front Committee that every candidate supported by the bloc be asked to pledge his approval of the program and his support of the government formed to execute it. "Surprisingly enough, the Communists, eager not to alienate the Radicals by seeming to dictate to them, rejected the proposal."

The Daily Worker carefully avoids any editorial mention of Herriot's case. Yet it is a secret to no one that Herriot is not at all friendly to the People's Front, and if anyone can be charged with supporting the "pro-Fascist measures" of Laval it is certainly Herriot who participated in Laval's cabinet.

Blum Prophecies Collapse

Daladier is the ritual leader of the Radicals, but the decisive influence is wielded by Herriot. Regardless of whether or not the Radicals received the largest delegation it was obvious from the outset that the next French Government would once again depend upon this party, which is plainly divided in its views toward the People's Front. Leon Blum, for example prophesied in his interview to the press shortly before the elections that the People's Front would collapse in the next Chamber: "About 60 Radicals with right-wing tendencies will leave the People's Front organization under the pretext that they cannot associate with a majority which includes Communists."

None other than Herriot is the leader of this group. One might have innocently imagined that when Herriot, for 31 years the mayor of Lyons ("Lyons and Herriot—the two names are inseparable") failed of election on the first ballot, the Stalinists would have taken the lead in administering a rebuke and a defeat in the run-offs to the man who so obviously endangers their entire political planning. Just the contrary occurred. Herriot received the support of the Socialists and the Communists and nosed out his reactionary opponent.

The salient aspects of the election have been already outlined by us in last week's article. It remains only to add that the results of the second ballot provide a striking verification of the manner in which the People's Front salvages the utterly bankrupt party of the Radicals.

The disintegration of this traditional party of French "democracy," which is so marked in the face of the joint support of both the Socialists and the Communists, and which continues at an ever increasing rate, has already established a relationship of forces in the Chamber which places the greatest strain upon the structure of the People's Front. The collapse of the People's Front would signify a tremendous acceleration in the process of rearmament within the French working class as a whole, within the Socialist Party, and even among the Stalinists. Its collapse at this juncture when the Fascists are as yet unprepared to launch a general offensive would come as a great boon to the French working class which can expect no counsel from Blum-Daladier-Cachin except betrayal and no action except capitulation.

The first serious test, and the resulting disintegration of the "victors" may come even prior to the convocation of the new Chamber over the question of the devaluation of the franc.

in action; and to meet the armed hands of the Fascists, the workers' defense must be armed and organized. The answer to the crisis of France must be given boldly: the workers' revolution.

But each of these tasks, without the accomplishment of which the workers of France are doomed to the fate of their German comrades, demands as its first and decisive pre-condition the reassembling of the revolutionary forces of the French proletariat, the forging of the revolutionary party, which can alone achieve the victory.

Progressives Beat Dillon Machine At the Auto Workers Convention

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opposing the previous craft union minded administration, the second test of their development showed definite weaknesses which can not be ignored.

Election of Officials

So strong was the desire of many delegates including the progressives to obtain offices that instead of fighting out differences on basic issues and then electing men on their stand, it was decided by the steering committee that election of officers should come first.

Martin, a compromise selection of the progressives, was chosen president. Previously Wyndham Mortimer, of Cleveland, one of the strongest leaders of the progressives, was favored as candidate. Ed Hall, secretary-treasurer, although bitterly opposed by progressives from his own territory, Wisconsin, was given second vice-presidency. In a deal, Wells, of Detroit, known as a middle-of-the-road man, became third vice president, and George Adde, of Toledo, by no means a thorough progressive, was chosen secretary-treasurer.

The caliber of the officers is very reminiscent of the rubber workers' officials selected last fall. Only the test of a class struggle will show clearly where each stands. Some of the rubber worker progressives turned reactionary in the Goodyear strike.

The Red Scare

A company-inspired red scare through issuance of a fake letter branding Martin and Mortimer as "communists" did not affect the elections.

In bitterness over the election results, reactionary delegates introduced a resolution to expel all known "communists" from the convention.

A two-hour debate ensued with militant Socialist delegates taking the best stand and putting up the strongest opposition to the resolution.

Instead of fighting the battle to

a finish and defeating the resolution once and for all, the progressive forces passed a motion to refer it back to the constitutional committee where it was forgotten.

In that connection, a speech by Rose Pesotta, of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, speaking as a guest that afternoon, spiked the reactionaries on the red scare. She gave an eloquent plea for political democracy in unions which was cheered by virtually everyone. After her talk the issue never came to the surface again.

Plays Craft Union Regime

Then came the memorable speech of Richard Frankenstein, an observer for the independent industrial union which Coughlin had influenced. He scathingly denounced the craft union policies of the Green regime. He criticized the ignorant attacks of many labor papers against his union pointing out that at no time in the past two years had any attempt been made by the A. F. of L. or any group to bring them into the federation. He declared the A. F. of L. conduct in the Motor Products strike where Dillon led scabs into the factory under the A. F. of L. banner a disgrace to unionism. Then he made a stirring plea for unity and pledged to bring the union into the autonomous United Automobile Workers while the delegates gave him a tremendous ovation. Anderson of the M.E.S.A. likewise took a similar stand in his talk.

It was clearly established that two main ideas were in the auto workers' minds—an expression of what the thousands of workers in the huge factories think. Those were UNITY of all unions under the banner of INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM.

Unity Probable Soon

Immediate plans for amalgamation including the seating of an independent union leader on the general executive board were made. It is therefore highly probable that unity will be established among the auto workers.

In this matter the Committee for Industrial Organization was praised by Frankenstein and Anderson. Frankenstein openly declared that the discussions with the C.I.O. representatives, Adolph Germer and others, had brought them to the unity position.

It can be said generally that the C.I.O., because of the very nature of the problems confronting the auto workers, played a more progressive role than in the Goodyear strike where more basic questions were confronted.

Labor Party Resolution

However, the credit for much of the progress made must be given to the active group of young militant Socialists. They supported and fought for every point of the program previously mentioned both in numerous caucus meetings and on the convention floor, except the Labor Party resolution and that deserves special mention. Although Stalinist-influenced progressives expected a bitter fight and considerable doubt was entertained about the passing of the Gorman resolution, the resolution was supported without any voice of opposition, without any debate.

(Since the writing of this article the press reported the carrying of a resolution endorsing Roosevelt for re-election. This motion was put and passed as a rider to the resolution urging the formation of a Farmer-Labor party following a speech by President Homer Martin, who appealed to the delegates not to cross the C.I.O. which is definitely committed to back Roosevelt in 1936.—Ed.)

It seemed that no one except the Stalinists took the resolution seriously. The S.P. delegates appeared confused in their position and some voted for and others apparently abstained from voting.

A Significant Observation

As a Toledo delegate remarked after the vote, "What we are vitally interested in is building a powerful progressive industrial union. The Labor Party isn't going to help. If we can bring in 450,000 auto workers after a real struggle against the auto magnates that will mean something to the workers." As a matter of fact, a careful survey led this writer to the opinion expressed above that the auto workers are a hundred-fold more interested in building a union by direct class struggle than in any Labor Party.

It hardly need be pointed out that such a struggle for elementary rights will necessarily take on revolutionary aspects because of the

forces against which the workers battle. Many of the militants appeared to realize this too, and expressed that opinion.

The delegates have no illusions about the ferocity of the struggle that will be waged against them. Speaker after speaker told of the spy-systems, the intimidation, the blacklists and other weapons brought into play to crush unionism. But the great advance of the United Rubber Workers left a definite impression and built up a new determination in the auto workers. "If the Goodyear strikers did that much, we can do the same," a Detroit delegate said.

It was in that temper that the delegates adjourned, returning to the 40,000 workers they represent to begin an intensive organization drive backed by the C.I.O. to unionize the 450,000 auto workers.

However a speech by Charles P. Howard, secretary of the C.I.O., and president of the Typographical union, indicated the limitations such aid would take.

"We believe that the worker should obtain more of a share of the product produced. The automobile workers deserve higher wages. We must fight to maintain the American standard of living to give us continued life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The employer must learn it is good business to pay higher wages. . . " Howard said, at a mass meeting.

Support of Roosevelt also was urged. In other words, a class collaboration policy will be pursued by the C.I.O. when obviously only the most militant struggle can bring any victory, as the Goodyear strike proved.

In conclusion, it must be said that the number of young militants at the convention offered real hope that the United Automobile Workers would base their fight for unionism on a class struggle policy. In clashing with the powerful auto magnates only such a policy offers the correct program for victory.

As in the rubber strike, irrespective of any particular leader or groups of leaders, future battles in the auto industry will assume such magnitude and the auto workers such a militancy that one can safely predict the development of cadres of class-conscious, revolutionary-minded militants by the very nature of the struggle.

Grant Wage Rise in Akron

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and boxes, and embellished with a sign, "Moving Goodrich to Oak Park, Pa.," a slap at the decentralization announcements of the past month.

With Goodrich marched its uniformed baseball team, and members—believe it or not—of the riding club, gallantly bearing signs, "Goodrich Riding Club—the Horses are Resting."

Splendid Fraternal Delegations

Throughout the parade were signs demanding the repeal of the sales tax, condemning the "Law and Order League," and attacking the Bedaux system. Fraternal delegates from Canton bore a large sign, "BLACKLISTED!—Repub Steel Workers," and served as a reminder that labor solidarity reaches everywhere. The Palmer match workers, carrying a sign, "LOCKED OUT!" and bearing on their shoulders what were obviously huge imitation matches, but which, curiously enough, would probably serve as fine picket clubs, were applauded constantly.

An encouraging sign, especially when it is remembered that Akron recruits largely from southern labor, was the large number of Negroes parading with the Pittsburgh Valve local.

After the parade, a mass meeting was held in Grace Park. Joseph Schlossberg of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers spoke, as did the C.P. stooge, Maurice Sugar of Detroit.

As a whole, however, the parade was a wonderful exhibition of the Akron trade unions' fresh, young strength. Naturally the barons of the rubber industry have not been napping. While throwing a sop to the workers, they have been busy solidifying the forces of reaction. At Goodyear the police force is being augmented, the "Law and Order League" is initiating a low dues paying union, and it is entering the political arena.

Everything points to new and glorious struggles ahead!

A Political Book-Review of "What is Communism?" and "Communism in the United States", By Earl Browder.

With a Few Side-Remarks on "Towards Soviet America," by William Z. Foster and Why his Book Was Suppressed.

How Browder Became the "Beloved Leader" and his Career Under Two Flags.

EARL BROWDER

THE MAN AND HIS BOOKS

SPEAKER

MAX SHACHTMAN

Editor of the New International

IRVING PLAZA HALL

15th ST. and IRVING PLACE

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