

World Socialism

SPAIN MOVES FORWARD

By HERBERT ZAM

SIXTEEN months after the defeat of the October uprising, the Spanish proletariat was able to score a decisive victory over the forces of reaction in the parliamentary election. This should be the best answer to those who cried "they should not have taken arms" and a brilliant illumination of the German debacle. *For worse than any defeat is failure to enter the fight when that fight has become the only alternative to miserable capitulation.* There can be no doubt that the heroic resistance to the onslaughts of reaction which the Spanish revolutionists put up not only preserved the morale of the movement and the organizations of the workers, but also made impossible the consolidation of the forces of reaction. Thus the workers were able to win back many democratic rights which had been abrogated after the revolt, compelled the freeing of many working class leaders (Caballero above all) and the amnestying of numerous participants in the actual uprising.

The Spanish workers profited well by the lessons of the October uprising. Not only have they been relieved of the illusions of republicanism and reformism, but they have learned the need for unity as a prerequisite for a successful struggle against

Spain's United Action

fascism and reaction. In these elections, therefore, a Peoples' Front, including Socialists, Communists and Left Republicans faced the other two camps: the fascists, clericals and monarchists led by Gil Robles on the extreme right under the watchword "National Front Against the Revolution and its Helpers;" and the right bourgeois republicans, under the leadership of the premier, Portela, in the center, but very close to the right in actual policies and social base. In the elections, the Portela group was but a stalking horse for Robles. Thus there were actually two camps: reaction and Peoples' Front. This was understood by the workers, whose pressure for unity was so powerful that even the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, in numerous instances participated in the elections in defiance of their historic traditions.

Some of the demands of the Peoples' Front were:

1. Amnesty for all political prisoners, to date back to Nov. 1933.
2. Reform of the judicial system (at present largely controlled by monarchist elements).
3. Lowering of taxes and increasing of credits for the peasantry.
4. Re-establishment of collective bargaining, institution of minimum wages and the placing of private social aid systems under government control.
5. Reform of the financial system.
6. National, free, non-sectarian education.
7. Cooperation with the League of Nations in foreign affairs.

This program, even making allowances for the fact that it was only an election platform, and not

Only Minimum Program

the program of a permanent organization as in France, once more shows the limitations of a People's Front or of any united front with the bourgeoisie. In the two important fields, agrarian and labor questions, the opposition of the bourgeois republicans made impossible the adoption of the essential demands: expropriation of the landed estates and the division of the land among the peasantry, and the setting up of a system of direct unemployment insurance. Similarly, the bourgeois parties rejected any

declaration on foreign policy except the one shown. These issues, nevertheless, remain basic in Spain, and their non-inclusion in the election program is a fore-shadow of future trouble between the proletarian forces and the republicans.

The Peoples' Front which succeeded in setting up organizations in 250 localities was not the only form of labor unity which made possible the electoral victory. There were also set up numerous joint local and district committees between the Socialist and Communist Parties and between the Socialist and Communist youth organizations; and a United Committee for the Support of the Victims of the White Terror, in which all sections of the labor movement except the anarchists participated, with local organizations in all the important cities and centers. Also, some months before the election, the labor movement succeeded in re-establishing its press, notwithstanding the threats of the government to re-introduce military censorship. El Socialista, published in Madrid, after only a few issues reached a circulation of 60,000.

The reactionary forces, having the support of practically all the big capitalists and landowners, spent enormous sums of money to prevent a victory for the left in the elections—in vain. They could not triumph over the proletariat which was backed by its firm convictions, its heroism, its hatred of the exploiters and oppressors and the splendid traditions of the October uprising.

But the electoral victory will be valuable only if it is a starting point for the onward march of the

Spanish proletarian revolution. History moves fast these days. Already the republic, as a progressive measure in Spain, has played its part. The bourgeois

republic cannot solve the problems which are now on the order of the day. Let it not be forgotten that it was under the republican regime with Zamora and Azana at its head that reaction was able to stage its come-back. If the economic power is left in the hands of the capitalists and landowners, sooner or later they will also take over political power. They must be deprived of their economic power through socialization. And this can be done only by a Socialist government, which will begin converting Spain into a proletarian, a Socialist country by expropriating the big landowners and capitalists; by nationalizing all undertakings controlled by foreign capital; by freeing the colonies; by converting the army into a toilers' militia and eventually a Red Army, if necessary; by reorganizing the political machinery so as to make it rest upon the broad masses of the toilers, particularly the workers. Largo Caballero, leader of the labor wing of the Peoples' Front, of the Socialist Party and the trade unions, has already indicated that the Socialists will not be content with a bourgeois republic, but will press onward to Socialism. The Azana government just set up can at best be a stop-gap.

The Spanish workers have the opportunity of making Spain the second workers' republic in the world. They must not miss the chance.

DON'T FORGET, SOCIALIST CALL FIRST ANNUAL DINNER ON MARCH 22.