

# World Socialism

## AFTER THE FRENCH ELECTIONS

By HERBERT ZAM

**T**HE great victory for the left parties in the French elections expresses the will to unity of the French toiling masses and their desire to struggle against fascism: for above all this was an anti-fascist election, in which for the first time in many years the proletarian parties were united for a common immediate objective, and in which they in turn were united with a large section of the middle class.

Contrary to popular belief, the main feature of the election is not the fact that the People's Front obtained a majority, both of the popular vote and of the seats in parliament, for it already had such a majority in the previous parliament. The majority increased considerably, however. Against 349 seats out of 609 in the old parliament, the People's Front will now have 381 seats out of 618. The outstanding feature of the election is the enormous vote cast for the proletarian parties, and the consequent shifts in strength, which expressed themselves in changes inside the People's Front itself.

### The Election

The Socialist and Communist Parties increased their seats by 110. Of this increase, 78 seats were gained at the expense of other parties in the People's Front, 9 from increased representation, and only 23 seats were gained from parties not in the left bloc. The center bloc parties lost but 26 seats, of which 19 went to the right and only 7 to the left. Thus it is evident that the real shift in votes and in seats was within the People's Front itself, a shift from the capitalist parties to the proletarian parties.

All these facts justify the conclusion that the toiling masses of France are losing faith in the ability of the middle class "democratic" bourgeois parties to combat fascism and are turning to the proletarian parties for leadership. The Radical Socialist Party seems to have been well aware of this movement and has clung tenaciously to the People's Front as the most important means of maintaining its hold upon its followers. The flight of the Radical workers, and also the middle class, to the Socialist and Communist parties was undoubtedly greatly slowed up by the demagogic "left" policy of the Radical Socialists.

### Workers' Parties

The proletarian parties registered a phenomenal success in the election, with some 40 per cent of the total vote and about 38 per cent of the seats in parliament. Far from being ruined by the united front with the Communists, the Socialist Party emerged the largest party, with two and a half million votes and 146 seats.

The independent Communist groups, on the other hand, were able to retain their ten seats. It must further be remembered that the Socialist Party had, some months before the election, adopted a programmatic declaration in favor of proletarian dictatorship, and much was made of this by the right parties, who endeavored to work up a "red scare." The proletariat, it seems, far from being scared by this, found it an additional reason for voting for the Socialist Party.

The Communists reaped a heavy harvest from their abandonment of ultra-left sectarianism, doubling their vote to one and a half million, and increasing their representation from 9 to 72 seats.

The fact that the proletarian parties between them polled 40 per cent of the vote, mainly in the important industrial areas, definitely indicates that already a majority of the proletariat and a considerable section of the lower

middle class support them. That these voters gave their votes to the revolutionary parties, rather than to the more moderate "democratic" or "anti-fascist" parties, must be taken as an indication of the willingness of the proletariat to support actions of these parties which will go beyond a mere defensive anti-fascist concentration.

Under these circumstances, a coalition government will only serve to dishearten the masses and demoralize the revolutionary forces. A coalition government, whether it is called by a more euphonious name, such as People's Front Government, whether or not it is supported by the Communists, can only undertake measures to salvage the capitalist system. So long as proletarian parties try to rule in partnership with capitalist parties, or run the government in a capitalist country, they must do it on the basis of accepting the capitalist organization of society, and will be able at best to carry out secondary reforms and occupy themselves with such purely bourgeois tasks as monetary reform. This was the course of development in Germany, and it led straight to the victory of the Nazis.

### For Revolution

The proletarian parties in France have received a definite mandate from a majority of the French proletariat for a turn toward a proletarian struggle for power, for a Socialist France. The parliamentary victory does not represent the attainment of power, but it can make possible a further mobilization of the proletariat and the lower middle class for the fight for Socialism in the extra-parliamentary arena, where the victory will be decided.

With such an orientation the proletarian parties would proceed to strengthen the alliance between them, looking forward to eventual unity. The People's Front would be converted into a Workers and Peasants Front, not merely in name, but in composition and program, and would definitely orientate toward Socialism. The proletarian parties would refuse to participate in any government together with the bourgeois parties, but would conduct a campaign for a Socialist-Communist government.

Such a government would immediately begin carrying out a program of primary proletarian reforms—social legislation, disbanding of the fascist organizations, formation of a workers militia and disarming of the bourgeoisie, establishment of control over the armed forces, liberation of the colonies, establishment of control over production, nationalization of basic industries. The government would have to base itself primarily upon the workers' mass movement, and the proletarian organizations, not upon parliament, and in turn it would have to take measures to stimulate and consolidate the labor movement.

The winning of the proletarian parties toward such an orientation is the immediate task of Revolutionary Socialism in France.

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