

The well-known authority on political economy, Mr. Harold Laski, discusses the men and the issues which are likely to dominate Spanish politics in the next four years, while a correspondent of the *Journal de Genève* describes the current situation in the Argentine.

# Spaniards *on* Two Continents

A LATIN  
LECTIONARY

## I. FOUR YEARS TO REBUILD SPAIN

By HAROLD LASKI

From the *Daily Herald*, London Labor Daily

WHEREVER men still care for progressive social experiment, or the ideal of intellectual toleration, for the kind of State in which the power of wealth is to be subordinated to the interest of the common man, the victory of the Left in the Spanish elections will be welcome.

It is not, directly, a victory for Socialism. It is the victory—immediately more significant—of a union of all Left forces, from the Social-Radicalism of Azaña through the Socialism

of Fernando de los Rios, to the Marxian views of Caballero, against the clerical-Fascism of Gil Robles, the great landowners, the industrial millionaires, and the Church.

It means—if there is no *coup d'état* from the Right, and if the Left are wise enough to maintain their present unity—four years in which to consolidate the ideals for which the Revolution of 1931 was made.

The Left was far from certain of a victory at all. It has won, primarily,

for two reasons. First, the working classes have resented profoundly the bloody repression of the Asturias rebellion of 1934; the Left victory means the pardon of some thirty thousand political prisoners.

Second, nearly three years of Tory government have convinced the masses that Gil Robles and his allies are merely the monarchy writ larger and more brutal. There is no hope for them in a continuance of that rule. The masses and the intellectuals have joined hands in the service of a progressive régime. The next task is to consolidate its foundations.

Do not let us underestimate their difficulties. They will need to master the banks. They will need drastically to reform the higher ranks of the army and to assure its loyalty. They will need to break up the large estates in the interest of the poor peasants.

Not less than any of these things, they will need widespread educational reform. Ten years of profound progressive legislation are essential if Liberal Spain is to be given its letters of credit.

There are long years of leeway to be made up. There are old and stubborn prejudices to be overcome. There are wide differences within the Left to be bridged so that an unbreakable unity of purpose confronts its enemies.

The Right is rich. It is well-disciplined. It does not shrink from either illegality or repression. It will take advantage of every weakness in its opponents' armor. I hope the Left will remember that the consolidation of their victory does not concern Spain alone. The elections were a triumph for the anti-Fascist forces of Europe. To guarantee that it endures is to give new hope to civilization in the dark-

est hour it has known for many years.

The Left has the men to do it. Señor Azaña, their leader, is the outstanding figure of the new Spain. We should call him a Left-wing Liberal in England. His great asset is character. He has courage, energy, determination. He relies not upon ingenious maneuver but on driving a straight path to his goal. In his previous tenure of office he showed an awareness of the central issues that was impressive; he dominated Spain in those years.

Señor Caballero is the outstanding trade union leader. In the last ten years he has moved rapidly to the Left. In personality there is something akin to Ernest Bevin about him. He is aggressive, dominating, insistent. He never stops fighting. There is, too, a certain relentlessness about him which has been sharpened by the grim experience of these last years. His treatment by the Robles régime has given him a special hold upon trade union opinion. Now his task is to build its emotions into a coherent ideology.

Intellectually, Don Fernando de los Rios towers above his colleagues. It is not yet certain that he has been reelected to the Cortes, as his opponents made a dead-set against him in Granada. This gentle professor is one of the noblest intellectuals in Europe. There is something of the moral beauty of Gilbert Murray in him, but with a deeper fighting quality. He was a great Minister of Education in the last Azaña Government, and as Foreign Secretary he gave new life to the position of Spain in the League. A Left Socialist, he is hated especially by the Right, which cannot forgive him, granted his distinguished forbears, for having thrown in his lot

with the working class; and the clericals hate him because he has always fought their power over the education of Spain.

I think he will have as much influence as anyone in keeping the forces of the Left together; for none knows better than he that the breakdown of the present union means something like Fascism on the Hitler model. Don Fernando is one of the little group of Spanish intellectuals who have kept alive there the noblest traditions of European free thought.

Prieto, no doubt, will return at once from his exile in Paris; and Señor Companys will go from behind the prison walls to preside over the autonomous government of Catalonia.

Both of them are men of sterling quality who have learned much in these last years of what it means in a brief period to transform a State which, morally and intellectually, still largely lived in the mental climate of the seventeenth century into a twentieth century society.

## II

It is, I think, unlikely that any of the leaders now will under-rate the difficulties of their task. Their knowledge of the reaction will have taught them that, hard as is the ascent to power, its maintenance is a still more difficult business.

They have to control followers of fiercely varying shades of opinion—Bakunin anarchists in Barcelona and Saragossa, ardent Syndicalists in the Asturias, passionate devotees of Moscow in many of the big cities, peasants with the mentality of those French agrarians who broke the yoke of feudalism in 1789.

All the drive and energy of Azaña and Caballero, all the delicate tact of Don Fernando will be needed to move all these forces on a united front.

The chance is real. For the victory has meant that the common man, in the face of unprecedented effort from the Right, has determined that the Left be given the chance to build upon the foundations of that creative passion which made the Revolution five years ago.

It is an immense responsibility for the simple reason that it is the last chance of constitutionalism in Spain. It has to be pursued without revenge, for that would drive the Right to desperation. But it has also to be pursued without weakness, since there are forces in Spain, especially in the alliance between big business and the Church, ready to seize upon the first signs that the grip of the new régime falters.

The Right is likely to be a powerful opposition in the Cortes, that can be restrained only as the united Left maintains its integrity unimpaired. If there is once a schism within its boundaries, the prospects of reaction will become bright once more.

Every Socialist, I think, should therefore seek for Spain the sense that the next four years are above all a breathing space within which to strengthen the progressive forces, to translate their purposes into the minds and hearts of the people unshakably.

Spain, in the long run, needs Socialism as Europe needs Socialism. But in the next immediate years the essential task is for Spanish Socialists to make their principles emerge as the logical next stage on a road travel down which must be more devious and indirect than they can easily like.

They must remember, as they collaborate, for how much they stand trustees. It is not often in history that the makers of a new world are given the opportunity peacefully to build its foundations. Let them make these secure before they settle the design of the superstructure.

## II. THE ARGENTINE RECOVERS

By C. HILLEKAMPS

Translated from the *Journal de Genève*, Geneva Liberal Daily

NEWCOMERS from Europe who would like to get an idea of the political situation in the Argentine by reading the papers might find themselves believing that the country is on the eve of a revolution. Political scandals are the order of the day; the tranquillity which General Justo's seizure of power, two years ago, seemed to have achieved appears now to be endangered; the opposition, hardly alive only a short time ago, is beginning to lift its head; everywhere one hears criticisms and complaints. Mr. de la Torre, one of the most redoubtable democrats of the opposition, has just brought into the open the 'meat scandal,' in which the Government is implicated since the refrigerating industry has not paid its taxes in full. The discussions in Parliament on this subject have exasperated passions and even brought guns into play. The provincial elections of Buenos Aires and Cordoba have been accompanied by violence and bloodshed.

Since the death of the ex-president, Irigoyen, the opposition has been led by Dr. Aldear, who had previously deserted its ranks. It is reinforced by the Radicals and the Socialists, both of them especially powerful at Buenos Aires. Its main accusation against the Government is that it falsified the elections. At Cordoba, where twenty-

eight radicals went armed to supervise the ballot, there was a violent clash with the police in which one radical and seven policemen were killed. Both parties claimed to have been attacked.

The political thermometer seems to indicate fever.

Nevertheless, the revolution has not yet come, although the Government has perhaps become a minority one. But the decisive factor in the Argentine, as in the rest of South America, remains the army. Now the Argentine army is powerful and loyal. Its leaders believe that the Radicals, with their deplorable economic theories, must be held back for at least five more years. After all, the army did not evict Irigoyen's Radicals to reinstall those of Aldear. It is afraid that the Radicals will bring back the financial crisis of 1929-30. (It is an open secret that many Radicals of note were politically ruined at that time.)

But what is the reason for this growing opposition in the country? The accusations directed at the Justo government are not easy to understand. It cannot be denied that the Justo régime, which succeeded legally General Uriburu's revolution, has saved the country from a financial catastrophe. The Argentine owes its safety above all to the energetic measures taken by the Minister of Finance,