

THE BRITISH GENERAL ELECTION AND ITS LESSON FOR THE FUTURE

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THE MAGNIFICENT results of the recent General Election are proof, first and foremost, of the Communist Party's repeated assertion that military victory in a People's War inevitably leads to victory over reaction at home.

It was the failure to understand this concept which led many people to believe that, because of certain superficial similarities between the recent elections and those of 1918, the prestige of the "war-winning Prime Minister" would carry to victory at the polls whatever party he chose to lead.

However, although the underlying reasons for the profound change in the political outlook of the people, which had been developing during the war years, was obviously beyond the ability of the Tories to understand, it would be untrue to say that

they did not appreciate that this change had taken place. Indeed, it was just because their information, particularly from the Services, convinced them that the people had "gone left" that such extraordinary precautions were taken to prevent the full expression of the people's will. The rushed election timed to take place while the electoral register was still inadequate, owing to the war-time movements of large sections of the people, and when thousands of workers would be away from their constituencies on badly needed holidays, together with the resurrection of time-dishonored bog-ies about "Socialist Gestapo" and the "danger to the people's savings," were devices expressing the Tories' fear. So, too, with the Tory press campaign, which descended to such depths of misrepresentation and calumny as to be denounced, not only by Labor supporters, but by some of their own friends. The character of the Tory press campaign, as well as democratic opinion on it, was aptly summed up in the pithy comment of two Canadian journalist Servicemen, Lieut. P. F. Berton and Lieut. J. F. Scott, who said in a letter to *World Press News*: "The London papers are not so much taking advantage of the freedom of the press as raping it."

Nevertheless, in spite of all this, the people overwhelmingly rejected the Tories and returned, for the first time, a Labor Government with a large enough majority to enable it

to combine responsibility with power. The result was a surprise, not only to the Tories, but to the Labor Party itself, and even to our own Party. For, it must be admitted, even we had underestimated the forces of the contributing factors, viz: The growth of political consciousness among the people as a result of the part played by the U.S.S.R. and Resistance Movements in the struggle against fascism; the development of political maturity and the assimilation of pre-war and war experiences by the people, to which our Party's work has largely contributed; the effect of the work of the Labor Ministers in the National Government, occupying as they did responsible but very difficult positions; and the influence of the result of the Presidential elections in America and the recent municipal elections in France.

The Labor victory at the polls registers the immense advance of the British people during the war. They have learned their own power and ability and have time and again demonstrated them under the most difficult circumstances. Their vote is an expression of their determination to share in the peace-time administration of their country, to play their part and have their say.

It is in the experience of a Labor Government that the Labor movement will learn more rapidly and completely than ever it could with Labor in opposition without responsibility.

The present state of the Parties, with one more seat to be contested—Central Hull*—is as follows:

Labor	392
Liberal	12
I.L.P.	3
Communist	2
Commonwealth	1
Irish National	2
Conservative	198
Ulster Unionist	9
National	2
Liberal National	13
Independents	14

The following table shows the number of votes cast in each case:

Electorate	32,836,419
Voted	24,953,332
Labor	11,982,874
Liberal	2,234,126
Commonwealth	110,634
I.L.P.	46,679
Communist	102,780
Others	195,233
Independent	325,202
Tory	8,660,560
Ulster Tory	392,454
National	142,906
Liberal National	759,883

The revolt against the Tories was not confined to the industrial centers but was spread all over the country. For the first time in British

* A cabled dispatch of August 10 reported a Labor victory for this constituency, with a vote of 8,776 in a total vote of 14,954.—The Editors.

history, a serious political awakening was seen in the Labor vote from the rural areas, both among agricultural workers and small farmers; and large sections of middle-class people voted Labor, also for the first time. For much of this "swing to the Left" among these particular sections, the Tories' own propaganda must take the credit—or the blame. Their hand was shown too plainly over such questions as wages and prices, controls and industry. They forgot, or did not know, that the experience of the war years had convinced these sections of the necessity, in their own interests, to end the chaos of the past. The agricultural worker and small farmer had learned that agriculture must be planned to be prosperous; the middle-class had learned that only the big monopolist was the gainer when industry and prices were left to the uncontrolled mercy of the industrialists themselves. As for the attempt to present Churchill as the one man who won the war, this merely angered hundreds of thousands of people who had struggled, sacrificed and lost their dear ones and their homes in order to defeat fascism. When it came to the test, the organized workers particularly remembered the Churchill of 1926 and not of 1940. Churchill's own election broadcast, in which he gave the impudent warning that trade unionists would lose their freedom under a Labor Government, contributed in no small measure to

the reviving of that memory, and added another one—the fact that he was the man who, just prior to the elections, refused to amend the Trades Disputes Act, and moreover bluntly said that the Conservatives would never agree to this.

Taken in conjunction with all this, the sober exposition of Labor's policy in the working-class press, and through able speakers on the radio and in the constituencies, captured the imagination of a serious, thoughtful electorate. While the weaknesses in Labor's organization, which might have meant a serious loss of votes, were offset by the readiness of local Labor Parties to accept the assistance of Communist Party Branches.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY RESULTS

In this election, the decisive choice before the people was between Toryism and Labor, and the conditions were unfavorable for any other Parties. Hence, the direct reflection of the Communist Party was necessarily low, and not the full reflection of its real political strength.

We ran 21 candidates, gained two M.P.'s and won 102,780 votes. But what lies behind the facts? For two years, since its July Congress in 1943, the Communist Party placed clearly before the people the issue of ending Tory domination. It was an aim that sank in and captured popular imagination. In this election, we had to

carry out a difficult tactical line. We were recommending the people to vote Communist where there was a Communist standing, and elsewhere to vote Labor. In the circumstances in which the election was fought, we had to set the pace for winning votes for Labor. This was bound to affect the thoughts of people, even in those constituencies where our own candidates were contesting. The workers were so keen on driving out the Tories that in the majority of cases they were taking no chances, even where a Communist candidate was concerned.

The very intensity of our campaign, with its factual exposure of the Tories, and its positive explanation of the political situation at home and abroad, and our policy—which was similar in content to that of the Labor Party—undoubtedly helped to win votes for Labor. The defeat of Amery, for example, is a tremendous thing not only for Birmingham but for India; and we believe that the fight put up by Comrade Dutt played an important part in defeating this arch-reactionary.

The Communist Party takes as much pride in what it did in securing the Labor victory at the election as in its fight for the second front in Europe. Aided by the Young Communist League, we know that we have played an important part in achieving this splendid result, both by our political activity, which we alone have conducted during the

war, and by the support we gave all Labor candidates during the campaign itself.

We must remember that this great movement to the Left takes place in a country where there is a splendid fundamental loyalty to Labor in its best and truest working-class sense. This never expressed itself so strongly as in the results of the General Election. In such circumstances, the fact that there are now two Communist M.P.'s, instead of the previous one, that I, myself, lost in East Rhondda by a mere 500 votes, and that our candidates altogether polled over 102,000 votes, is a significant recognition by the electorate of the importance of the role of the Communist Party. These gains were recorded, remember, in an election in which all other smaller Parties were almost swept away in the violence of the Labor avalanche.

And here I must emphasize a point which I touched on in a previous paragraph. The establishment of splendid new relations between Branches of the Local Labor and Communist Parties is one of the most important gains of the General Election, and one which is bound to have tremendous influence on the future work of the whole Labor movement. We are determined that this new-found unity shall not remain merely a phenomenon of the General Election. We intend to consolidate the new relations we have established and prove that if the

assistance of the Communist Party is essential to win power for Labor, it is more essential still for the purpose of developing the mass support that will enable the policy of the Labor Government to be carried out. Many Labor M.P.'s have since the election given public expression to their warm appreciation of our assistance. They, and the whole Labor movement, may be assured of our continued and as freely given support.

THE NEW LABOR GOVERNMENT

There has never been a Government with such mass support and world-wide goodwill behind it as the new Labor Government in Britain. From America to Russia, from Poland to France, from Spain to Greece, from China to India, there is a world-wide expectation of the new policy at home and abroad that the Labor Government will carry out.

There can be no doubt that the situation in which the Labor Government has now to operate is both difficult and complicated. The problems to be solved are urgent and gigantic; but it would be a profound under-estimation of the will and support of the people behind the new Government, and the new developments now taking place throughout Europe, to believe that these problems cannot be solved in the interests of the common people. Any sugges-

tion of a moderation of Labor's declared policy will arise from the traditional desire of some Labor leaders to serve the interests of the ruling class rather than their own, and to make this the excuse for succumbing to difficulties and complications that otherwise would be overcome. We must wage war on the conception, for example, that the Labor Government in Britain can only carry out its policy successfully on the basis of the good will and benevolence of American monopolists. Instead of seeing this aspect of the situation, we have to see the enormous impetus given to the American labor and progressive movement as a result of the political victory over the monopolists in Britain.

The workers quite rightly will expect great things from the new Government, and whilst the Communist Party must guard against expecting too much too quickly, it must insist in its propaganda on a real fight being made to carry out the priority measures which will be indicated in the Labor Government's "King's Speech." It is necessary to emphasize this point because there can be tendencies to moderate the Labor Party policy outlined in "Let us Face the Future" (on which Labor won the Election), on the part of some Conservative-minded leaders, who may tend to succumb to the difficulties of the situation and the resistance of the monopoly capitalists. Our Party must develop the will and feeling of

confidence that Labor-in and out of Parliament can solve all problems however difficult they may appear to be, and that it will not tolerate any attempted sabotage and resistance by the monopoly capitalists to the declared will of the people.

It is not a question of the Communist Party now putting new demands on the Labor Government, but of successfully organizing the mass support of the people, which will help the Labor Government to carry out its declared policy.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Our responsibilities in the new situation are greater than ever before. The fight for the carrying out of Labor's program will not be conducted only in the Parliamentary field. Tory reaction will not give up as easily as all that; and we would be naive not to expect sabotage and obstruction in industry and wherever the Tories still retain power. It will be for the Communist Party to maintain the people's vigilance in support of the Labor Government.

Our opportunities were never greater, because never has our prestige been so high.

In the future, as in the past, the Communist Party sets itself the task of uniting and strengthening the Labor movement, not only for the immediate struggles against reaction, but so that we can stride still further

along the path to Socialism. As each practical measure of social reform is carried out by the Labor Government, we will rally the people in its support, and explain the greater possibilities that open out for the nation when once the full socialization of the means of production, distribution and exchange has been established, and the system of exploitation of man by man finally ended.

Never before has our work in the trade unions been so important as now. The Labor Party and the Labor Government will need the help of the trade unions. The reactionaries are fully aware of this; and we are certain that their main line of attack will be the attempt to drive a wedge between the trade unions and the Labor Government. It will be remembered that on the occasion of the two previous Labor Governments there were serious differences between the trade unions and the Government. We are confident that the constructive role now played by our members in the leadership of some of the most important trade unions in the country will be a powerful factor in bringing these differences to an end.

We have to help the trade unions to retain and increase their present membership. Already there is evidence that some unions are losing members because of the closing down of war factories. We must combat this with all our strength.

We must rouse the Labor move-

ment to demand the immediate application of the policy adopted at the Blackpool Trades Union Congress in 1944 on trade union reconstruction. We must give increased support to shop stewards and strengthen factory organization. The trade unions must be given more say than they have had during the war in the administration of controls and in the carrying out of policy generally. The closest possible consultation between the Labor Government and the trade unions is essential.

Our Party must help the Labor Party to strengthen itself numerically and financially. We shall try to win the affiliation of every trade union Branch to the Labor Party and Trades Councils. We shall carry out a campaign for the payment of the political levy, for the continuation of united activity.

We need a stronger Labor Party than exists at the present time. The more support that can be won for the affiliation of the Communist Party to the Labor Party, the stronger the Labor Party becomes, and the stronger the Labor Government will be to resist the opposition of reactionaries and fascists in the operation of its own policy.

Finally, we must now do everything in our power to strengthen the Communist Party. This is the key to real success. Our present registered membership bears little relation to the opportunities that exist, and very inaccurately reflects our actual in-

fluence in the Labor movement.

We need a strong Communist Party because only the Communist Party can bring a Marxist understanding to the problems which are bound to confront the Labor movement in the coming period. We need a strong Communist Party because only through our Marxist education and propaganda can the people be brought to understand the present problems in relation to the whole advance of the working class to final victory over capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

It is not a question of placing the Communist Party against the Labor Party. It is a fact that the more fighters by hand and brain are organized in the Communist Party, and the greater the circulation of our Communist paper, then the stronger the entire Labor movement becomes. With a Labor victory at this election, the first steps have been taken towards the realization of a new Britain, a Britain for the people, which will win greater prestige, authority and influence in the councils of the nations of the world than has ever been the case before. But we do not delude ourselves that these are anything but the first steps, and we know that there are many more that must be taken before our final goal is reached.

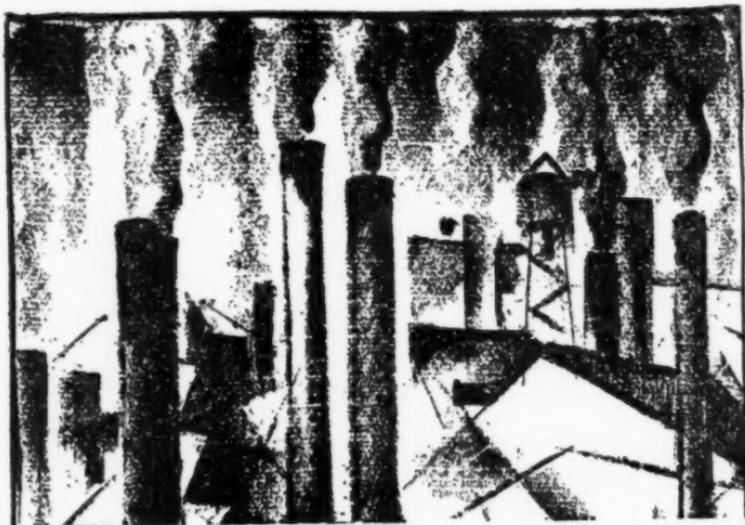
We need a strong Communist Party to follow and explain to the people the significance of every phase of the international situation, and

especially the work and policy of the Communist Parties on the continent—in the new governments. Some elements in the Labor Party will try to keep this dark. It is our job to show the positive and constructive role that our brother parties are playing all over Europe.

Already, as a result of our work during the election campaign, we are pleased to note a significant rise in our membership. The drive for

new members will now be carried forward with greater intensity.

We are moving into a new situation, giving the opportunity of writing glorious new pages of history for our country. It shall be our proud duty to give the very maximum of our assistance in writing these pages. The terrific blow that reaction has received in the General Election is the spur to new efforts and new battles.



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