

The Communist Party and the Election *

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I propose to deal with four points:—

1. Some comments on the present situation.

2. An assessment of the Labour Party Conference.

3. The General Election.

4. Some arguments in relation to our policy.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Since April great new events have taken place. The victory over fascism in Europe transcends everything else. There is the significance of the French elections. The Oaklands Trade Union Conference has produced a draft for the World Trade Union Federation, to come up for ratification in Paris next September. The San Francisco Conference is still in session. Finally has come the announcement of the General Election.

Roosevelt's Death

There is a certain deterioration in the international situation, but we should not be surprised at this. We knew that the political and moral destruction of fascism was as great a task as its military defeat. When one of the world's greatest anti-fascists dies, one of the architects of Crimea, undoubtedly reaction both at home

and abroad receives a new incentive to sow discord and confusion. We must recognise the significance of the moves to the right of President Truman and of Churchill.

But to believe that because of a series of disquieting happenings the Crimea decisions are in abeyance, would be a great error. The Crimea decisions are not based on three men, but on the political and economic interests of the three countries they represent. The necessity for the decisions still exists and they will be fulfilled. We are in a situation where it is absolutely essential that we should retain a balanced judgment and see the situation as a whole. We should not come to any hasty conclusions and should avoid political provocation.

San Francisco

San Francisco has not failed, as so many revolutionary and powerful interests have worked to achieve. The marvel is that with 47 nations so much *has* been accomplished. There was a summary of the outstanding achievements of San Francisco in the press this morning. We ought to take a certain inspiration because of the moral leadership of the delegation of the Soviet Union at San Francisco.

Undoubtedly there has been a certain deterioration in the relations between the Soviet Union and Britain and America. There is evidence of the

* Report of speech delivered to a special meeting of the Executive Committee, district organisers and parliamentary candidates of the Communist Party on May 25th, 1945.

great concern this is causing both here and in the Soviet Union.

Causes for Suspicion

Churchill set the tone to certain aspects of the new problems arising in his victory broadcast after V-Day. The gospel of "talking rough" to the Russians is not confined to the Tories—neither is the fear of a new Europe influenced by the Soviet Union confined to the Tory Party.

What are the reasons for the suspicions between Britain and the U.S.S.R.? They were evidenced in the complete mess-up of the announcement of V-Day—on one day in Great Britain and on another day by the U.S.S.R.

The problems which cause suspicion in certain circles in Britain are Poland, Austria, Trieste, the fact that the Soviet Union was determined upon the political and moral destruction of fascism, and the response of the people in the areas liberated by the Red Army to the Soviet Union.

In the Soviet Union they suspect British policy in Greece, the treatment of Doenitz, the Flensburg "government," the mollicoddling of Goering, the attempts to compare Soviet democracy with totalitarian regimes, the slowness with which war criminals are being brought to trial. These matters, which are worrying people in the Soviet Union, are precisely the same as those which are worrying anti-fascists all over the world.

Slander Campaign

There is at the moment a terrific slander campaign going on against the Soviet Union. At no time since 1940 has the press shown such persistence in trying to sow confusion and discord in relation to the Soviet Union. There is a great deal of talk about "the next war will be with Russia," that the Polish army is ready to march into Russia, etc.

Stalin's letter to *The Times*, taken in conjunction with Molotov's and Manuilevski's stand at San Francisco, shows the strength of the Soviet Union and the firmness of its policy for peace and democratic co-operation. We must emulate this spirit in defending the interests of the British people and for the restoration of Europe. Our general line, as in particular evidenced by the events since Crimea, will prove in the light of events to be absolutely correct. The new situation demands a change in emphasis for the General Election.

We must not forget, and must keep in the foreground, two points:—

1. The political struggle in Britain cannot be resumed in 1945 at the point at which it was left in 1939.

2. The character of the gigantic problems on the agenda for solution: victory over Japan, the problem of security, the reorganisation of British industry, the restoration of Europe, and co-operation in the economic field.

Which Solution?

The immediate line of our fight, and also the problems I have mentioned, are of such a character that it is of tremendous significance as to whether they are solved in the way of the common people or in the way of the monopolists. I believe that no one Party or group can tackle these problems.

THE BLACKPOOL LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

This conference was naturally dominated by the political crisis that arose last weekend. The vote on unity could not have been taken in more unfavourable circumstances. The Standing Orders Committee would not allow the large unions the opportunity of placing resolutions on unity on the Standing Orders paper. So the arguments in favour of unity could not be argued from a political point of view, but only by the reference back of the Standing Orders Committee report.

This was done just after Ellen Wilkinson's presidential speech, before the tellers had been elected for votes at the conference and for the election of the E.C. and was taken in an atmosphere of some confusion. Tanner moved the reference back and was seconded by Hallsworth. The fact that leading members of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had taken this step was of tremendous significance. The vote was 1,219,000 for to 1,314,000 against—a majority of 95,000 against. This vote had a tremendous effect on the conference at the time and right up to the close of the conference.

If this vote had not gone so close, Laski's statement would not have been made: "Labour will not enter a coalition with the Tories after the General Election, whatever the state of Parties. As to the issue of joining with other people, I beg the Conference not to tie the hands of the Party."

This vote has also an important bearing on the question of Communist Party affiliation, which will come up for decision in 1946.

THE GENERAL ELECTION

We cannot discuss this question unless we get a picture of what we are up against. 641 new members are to be elected. This means Labour has to win 321 for a majority.

The following was the position in past elections:—

Year	Administration	Majority
1935	Tory	247
1931	*Tory	495
1929	Labour	22
1924	Tory	211

These figures show the immensity of the task before us.

The figures in the present Parliament are 401 reactionaries, 193 Labour and Progressive, 21 Independent.

* Called "National Government" because National Liberals and National Labour (Macdonaldites) and others were included.

In 1935 the Tories had 35 per cent. of the votes and 70 per cent. of the seats; 48 M.Ps. were returned in three-cornered fights—33 of them were Tories. In 1935 the Liberals contested 157 seats; in 1945 they are contesting 300. In 1945 the Tories are contesting 600 seats, Labour 600, Liberals 300, C.P. 22, Common Wealth between 40 and 60, Independents 10.

A Terrific Task

It will be a terrific task to win a Labour majority. We should remember the difficulties of a General Election between two wars—between the end of the war in Europe and that in Japan. We should remember that the outstanding feature of the return of Roosevelt was the unwillingness of the American soldiers to change their Commander in Chief because it might prolong the war.

We should remember that in comparison with this election the Zinoviev Letter Election will be a pleasant Sunday afternoon. We should note the Tory tactics in Canada, and the fact that the press is playing up to the alarm that is reported from certain quarters in America in case Churchill is defeated.

Three Points

There are three points we should remember as a guide to our propaganda:—

1. The political awakening of the people.

2. The realisation that Churchill has never been trusted by the working-class of this country. They do not trust him, except as a war-leader. This is a contrast to what was felt for Roosevelt.

3. The Tories are banking on using dashing tank commanders and submarine officers. Our reply must be that millions of the people, whether soldiers or civilians, who have been through the blitz, are just as much

heroes as dashing young officers, and defeat this trick.

We shall strike a note of confidence in the working-class. On national unity and the character of a new Government our position is known and our position is abundantly justified. The chief issue now is the defeat of the Tory Party, and the results of the election will settle the character of Government and national unity.

There are some propaganda arguments that can be used in the course of the campaign.

1. There is not one thing in the Twelve Point Tory programme that they could not have carried out between the two wars if they had wanted to—they had big majorities, and could have done so.

2. It is the Tory Party that is responsible for the rise of fascism in the world.

The Nation Won

3. Not one man—but the nation, in which the working-class is the majority, has won the war.

4. There is enormous capital for Labour and Communist candidates in popularising the role of the Soviet Union. Just as its policy and its 15,000,000 casualties have played the chief role in winning the war, so its policy now is the chief guarantee of the winning of a permanent peace. We should take the offensive on this.

5. We should spread the knowledge of political awakening in Europe and popularise the role of the resistance movements and their power in the new governments. We should stress the lives that have been saved by national unity and working-class unity in the occupied countries. Especially important is the result of the French elections.

World War III

6. On all this gossip about "war with the U.S.S.R.," we must deal with the role of the working-class—we

know that they will not go and fight the Red Army.

7. Our economic policy alone can save Britain from becoming one of the world's distressed areas. We must prove, on the basis of the facts, the case for nationalisation. Our policy, as set out in *How to Win the Peace* and in leaflets, etc., must be brought home to the people. We must give the facts and show that our policy is necessary to save Britain. Undoubtedly one of the weaknesses of the Blackpool conference was the failure to realise the changed position of Britain in relation to America, Canada and other countries. If the working-class wants higher wages, shorter hours and so on, this all depends on our economic position.

Defeating Japan Quickly

8. On the question of a speedy victory over Japan—speedy victory in Japan requires speedy defeat of Tories. We must show the effect of their policy in India, Malaya, Burma. Churchill's tactic of bringing the election on earlier means the creation of two months of confusion and doubt in the minds of the war workers.

9. The forces and their relatives need the help of the Labour Party. There is a strong feeling among the electors on the position of servicemen: and this feeling was brought out, even though it meant a defeat of the Executive by the Labour Conference resolution on war gratuities.

Tory Foreign Policy

10. Tory foreign policy is a familiar story—the story of Spain, Abyssinia, China. Tory foreign policy caused the war and can lose the peace. The new Europe demands a new Britain.

11. The Party must prevent the term "Nation" being part of Tory propaganda. We are the nation, and the best defenders of its interests.

12. Shall Britain's resources be used for the needs of the people or for the

benefit of the monopolists. Churchill has chosen the monopolists.

13. Where Labour leaders attack the Communist Party we should have no hesitation in replying. When will some of these leaders stop hating communism more than they hate capitalism? Their policy is preventing a united working-class movement which could move forward to victory and socialism.

14. Crimea is not dead. Roosevelt is dead, Churchill has changed, but Stalin is alive, and so is the U.S.S.R. The Crimea decisions are decisions to which the Soviet Union has put its hand, and will not go back on.

World Trade Unions

15. The peace is not going to be the same as last time. Big positive gains have been won. Victory over fascism has been achieved. Socialism and democracy have been successfully defended. There is a stronger labour movement in this country and the U.S.A. There are 27 million trade unionists in the Soviet Union. A world Trade Union Federation has been established—this would not have been thought possible a year ago. There is a new Europe. San Francisco has many positive achievements to its credit. The political consciousness of millions of people in this country has been deepened. Tory tactics now are determined by the fact that they understand better what has been won than many of the members of the labour movement. They are afraid of the position

of the labour movement and of the Soviet Union.

16. We must launch terrific blows against the Tory Party. Every member of our Party must set a personal example, whether we fight for our own candidates or whether we offer help to the Labour Party. Our offer of help to the Labour Party will be unconditional. There will be no conditions for helping the Labour candidates.

The fate of Britain depends on the General Election. We fought for the Second Front and were slandered and maligned—we won it, but only just in time. If we had not won when we did five shells a minute would have been falling on London.

Vision of Socialism

It is an integral part of our work that we must give the people a vision of what socialism means in this country. We must rouse up class feeling. We must make the people really hate Tory rule, and this will be of enormous value to us after the General Election. We must strengthen the Labour Party, the Communist Party, the trade unions and the Co-operatives.

The gauntlet has been thrown down—we pick it up in order to win.

We have the greatest chance our Party ever had to save the labour and progressive movement and the development of the new world that is now being born. We must be proud to take advantage of the opportunity lying before us.

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