

# The British Labor Government

By Maurice Spector

The results of the British general election could occasion little surprise. The series of preceding bye-elections had clearly indicated the fate of the Baldwin Government. Its record had been so obviously reactionary, its treatment of the working class so provocative, (the suppression of the miners and the general strikes, the rupture with the USSR, the imperialist expedition to suppress the Chinese revolutionary movement, the repressive anti-trade union act, and the naval parity conflict with the United States), that a second Labor Government or Liberal Labor coalition was logically to be expected.

The British working class has been moving steadily leftward since the end of the war under the circumstance of the loss of British economic supremacy to the United States and powerful challenge of industrial competition on all sides in a consistently shrinking world market. The lords of British finance and industry have abandoned their pre-war conciliatory attitude to the trade union movement and have sought to maintain their pace in a world of increasing competition and rationalization, by applying the screws to the working class. In recent years and particularly under the Baldwin regime, the capitalist attacks on the workers have grown in scope and provocation; and the masses have reacted in turn by a more rapid pace of radicalization.

The Labor Party has reaped the harvest of this growing working class rebelliousness. The experiment of the first labor government may have "unmasked" MacDonaldism to the officials of the British Communist Party, but certainly not to the workers as a whole. Capitalist public opinion has extended the MacDonald Cabinet a very cordial welcome. It realizes that there is little to fear of "socialist experiments" from this Labor Government of extreme Right Wing Trade Union Bureaucrats and Liberals still reeking of their "apostasy" to Lloyd George. MacDonald did not even think it necessary to make concessions to the pseudo-lefts of the I. L. P. Maxton school, who pass so many resolutions for "socialism in our time". Shaw, Clynes, Henderson, Sankey, Jowett, and their like will prove the same sturdy defenders of British Imperialism in Egypt and India they always have been. The maintenance of the Empire is a point of cardinal policy in the platform of MacDonald. That means "continuity" in the repression of the subject nationalities of the Empire by coercive means if necessary.

### The MacDonald Program.

The program of the MacDonald government is the program of liberalism, dressed up in the shreds and tatters of socialist phraseology. The recognition of Russia would eventually have been carried out by the Conservatives under pressure of their own industrialist delegations to Moscow, and is equally a demand of the Lloyd George Party. The hand that MacDonald extends to the USSR will not be to cement such a class accord as there would exist between two Workers Governments, because MacDonald is not the head of a Workers Government. The capital levy the only demand in the former Labor Party election platforms that threatened a serious clash with capital, has been dropped. Instead of nationalization of the mines and other industries, by the promise of which the masses were rallied to the Labor Party, what will be fostered is the Melchett-Turner scheme of rationalization on the basis of private property. It remains to be seen if there will be any repeal of the Trade Union Act of the Baldwin Government which outlawed the general strike and made mass picketing a crime. MacDonald and the whole labor bureaucracy are as much opposed to the General Strike as Baldwin or Churchill, and if this reactionary legislation hamstringing trade unionism is repealed, it will only be under the most threatening pressure of the masses.

The social reformists in the United States bubbled over with delight at this latest "victory for socialism". The Magdeburg Congress of the German social democratic party sent a telegram of greetings to MacDonald. But so far as the working class is concerned the victory of the laborites in England means as much "socialism" as the presence of the social democrats in the German coalition Government. That is, it means nothing for socialism and everything for the support of a "democracy" which is the camouflage for capitalism. The "peace-loving" German social democracy in convention assembled has just endorsed the action of its cabinet ministers in voting for a cruiser program. MacDonald is busy embracing the notorious Dawes and there is a great hue and cry about the impending settlement of the difficult problems arising from naval competition between the British and American empires. But it is in the nature of the whole position MacDonald and the liberalized Labor Party take to the Empire, that his "pacifism" cannot be more than a vain gesture. The danger of war arises not from the naval race but from the necessities of the capitalist-imperialist struggle for markets. Even if an accord of absolute naval parity could be reached, this does not settle the problem of military supremacy. How does MacDonaldism propose to "disarm" the American monopolies, their appetites just getting whetted for export trade, and basing themselves on the greatest system of mass production in the world, from capturing markets from the British?

### The Defeat of the Communists.

How did the Communists fare in the election? The opportunity for appealing to the masses on a revolutionary program were never before in British history so favorable yet it must be recorded that the vote of 50,000 the Communists drew, constitutes a resounding defeat for our party. There is no sense in sweetening the pill. We are under no political or financial obligations to Stalin that necessitate soft-pedaling on the lessons of the election. It is true that in recent years

the methods of analysis of the Stalinized Executives, 'Agit-Props' and Press, of the Comintern have become very simple, that is, when the Communist Party suffers a defeat all you need do is to lie about it and shout that it was really a victory, but this was not the method of the Lenin Comintern. Thus latterly the Thaelmann-led German Communist Party was isolated in connection with the May Day events, the "red shop stewards" that had been elected proved broken reeds, the Red Front was proscribed, the "general strike", the party officialdom called, to which 50,000 in the whole country responded, was a terrible fiasco, the subsequent Saxony elections registered Communist losses, but the Stalinites everywhere hail all this as a series of phenomenal successes that elevate the struggle to a "higher plane". But even downright falsification is unable to serve the Daily Worker and Freiheit for concealing the extent of the defeat of the British party.

How does it come about that at a time when the British masses are admittedly moving leftwards and being radicalized and subjected to rationalization, the Communists are unable to elect a single representative? It is not enough to use another frequent Stalinite alibi and say the social-democrats and the bourgeoisie were against us. That, we believe, is the reason for the existence of a Communist Party. The reason is to be found in the fact that the enormous prestige and resources of the Soviet Government, the Soviet Trade Union Movement, the CPSU and the Comintern have since the Fifth Congress, four years ago, been thrown not on the side of developing and consolidating a revolutionary Communist Party to take advantage of the sharpening class struggle: these were thrown on the

side of the reformist trade union bureaucracy thru the agency of the Anglo-Russian Committee. This Committee was held up by Stalin and Bucharin as the real center for the organization of resistance to the war danger. To the exigencies of maintaining this bloc was sacrificed the independence of the Communist Party, which was utterly submerged in the General strike, and which at first even refused to criticize the betrayers of the strike. In the interests of this Anglo-Russian Committee, Tomsy agreed to recognize the fakers of the British General Council as the sole spokesmen of the British trade union movement, and the Minority Movement was a parade of windy speech making and innocuous resolutions. It is ridiculous to assert that Purcell, Hicks and their fellows were "unmasked" by the communists even after the event, when the Stalin-Tomsy-Bucharin bloc sought at all costs, including the surrender of principle, to maintain their relations with the British labor bureaucracy.

When you have followed such a consistent opportunist line for years you cannot suddenly turn around and repair the damage with dramatic ultra left gestures. There was nothing in the preceding conduct of the Communist Party to prepare the workers to follow its latest "new line" with conviction. The workers saw the spectacle of the Central Committee of the Party itself at one time wide open on the question of an independent electoral policy. The Stalin policy is primarily responsible for the disastrous showing of the British Communists in the election. The slogan of "Class against Class" which they parroted with the French Stalinites, fell on deaf ears. Had the communists carried out the line indicated for them in Trotsky's Whither England written before the General Strike, the leftward movement of the British working class would not have been directed as it has been, chiefly into the channels of parliamentary reformism.

## Revolutionary Perspectives in India

### A LETTER TO TROTSKY

By F. Dingelstaedt.

Kansk, July 8, 1928.

Dear Comrade Leo Davidovitch:

At the suggestion of V. I decided to communicate to you in writing some of my thoughts on the perspectives of the proletarian revolution in India. Unfortunately, the scarceness of reliable documents and their very poor quality do not permit the establishment of sufficiently decisive conclusions. It goes without saying that the official English statistics have not set themselves the task of facilitating a Marxist analysis in the study of the social and economic situation in India. So far as the works that have appeared up to now are concerned, they suffer from so many faults from the methodological point of view, or else they are so tendencious, that they are of very little use to our purpose. An exception among all the works dealing with India can perhaps be made of some books by Professor Schack, who calls himself a Marxist, and of Professor Narain, who keeps clear of anything approaching Marxism. Of further account as very interesting sources of factual material are the conscientious studies of Dr. Mann, G. Glater and K. K. Das.

Upon my request, some comrades selected a part of the books that I collected and sent them to you. It is only unfortunate that after the house-searchings such a disorder was brought into my books that certain things were lost. As for me, they categorically refused to let me go through the house to put my personal affairs in order (as I requested). As a result I cannot at all guarantee that the selection of books on India sent to you corresponds with your desires. My brother has forwarded to me certain works, among them many interesting official Reports: if you want them I will send them to you by mail.

### THE NATURE OF INDIAN INDUSTRY.

To grasp the kernel of the question, it must first of all be pointed out that despite its incredible backwardness from the point of view of the disproportion between agriculture and industry, India is a country of concentrated, advanced and in part highly developed capitalism (despite certain negative sides).

Indian industry developed onesidedly in the field of textiles; its proletariat is still strongly bound to the land; the unity of the proletariat is extraordinarily hampered by tribal differences, by religious and caste prejudices; nevertheless, as the experience of the last ten years has shown, the industrial proletariat constitutes an ever growing class force. To this day it is passing through a period of spontaneous movement, insufficiently conscious, corresponding somewhat to our period before 1905. It is still difficult to say with what speed it will be able to work out the necessary subjective factors for revolutionary action: its class vanguard, the Party, its traditions and its class program. But the circumstances in which the Indian proletariat is developing are such as to justify the hope for an unusually rapid rise to class maturity.

By comparing the various figures of the official census of 1921, I have arrived at approximately the following schema of the class composition of the Indian population:

### 1. PROLETARIAT.

	In Millions
Industrial workers	2.65
Miners	54
Transport workers	

Plantation Workers	1.29
	8.57
Servants	4.57
Unskilled Workers (navvies, stevedores, etc.)	9.58
Land Workers and Day Laborers	37.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>60.84</b>
<b>II. INDEPENDENT SMALL PRODUCERS.</b>	
Husbandmen (petty proprietors and farmers: middle peasants and above all the poor peasants)	173.00
Breeders, Fishermen, Market-gardners, gardeners hunters	7.11
Artisans	30.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>210.52</b>
<b>III. GROUPS "OUTSIDE THE CLASSES".</b>	
Army and Police	2.18
Beggars and Prostitutes	3.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.43</b>
<b>IV. BOURGEOISIE.</b>	
Large and Middle Landowners, Kulaks	10.72
Merchants (including the small ones)	18.12
Industrialists	83
"Liberal" Professions	5.02
Officials	4.69
Rentiers ("coupon-clippers")	.48
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.26</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>310</b>

This table acquires its significance only when its vital social content is penetrated. It is the second group (the independent small producers) that is specially important. So far as the husbandmen are concerned, they constitute for the most part an economically weak section of the peasantry that is being gradually ruined from year to year by the large landowners and the officials. The position of the artisans is no better: they are the half-famished descendants of a class that was once much more numerous and flourishing in ancient India.

### PROLETARIA MUST LEAD THE STRUGGLE.

The desperate situation of the main mass of the agrarian population of the country, with the existence of relatively large numbers of workers, (who are very strongly represented in the country), suggests the urgent necessity of the revolutionary alliance of the workers and the peasants, but under the condition that the proletariat, organized in a class party, independent, having its own existence and program, has the hegemony. No one can prove now that certain "special" conditions exist in India, that not the proletariat, but some other class, can lead the great masses of the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism.

Thence the clear conclusion that to dilute the revolutionary proletarian vanguard, to deprive its program and its slogans of the purity of class principles, is simply to injure the work of the proletarian revolution in India.

That is just why one cannot agree with those who defend the necessity of organizing a workers' and peasants' party in India (Stalin), and not a workers' party. In my recently published book "The Agrarian Question in India", I lay stress in great detail on the problem of the Indian revolution from the viewpoint of the solution to give to the ticklish questions of the agriculture of this country.

F. Dingelstaedt