

The Churchill Coalition —and the Alternative

BY D. N. PRITT, K.C., M.P.

TO MEET the growing dissatisfaction in the country, the Coalition Government initiated a debate in the House of Commons, and moved a vote of confidence in itself. They secured an overwhelming majority of votes (the minority numbered five) and Mr. Churchill's final speech secured for him an ovation from members whose tendency to mass hysteria, as shown in the Munich debate, was once more manifested. Was it an overwhelming victory? Within two days even the Government Press in its comment on the Premier's speech, was discovering the emptiness of content that lay beneath its flowers of rhetoric. It is therefore necessary to analyse the real position of the Government following this debate.

The M.P.s who voted for Tory-Liberal-Labour Coalition were as uneasy about it as could be. They resembled the inhabitants of a building which has not yet been officially declared uninhabitable, and who do the best they can to continue it as a dwelling, though they never know when it may tumble about their ears. The confidence vote was an attempt to shore it up.

The situation is very different from that of a year ago when they blithely got rid of Chamberlain knowing there was a better card in the pack, because they could turn to Churchill and the formation of the Coalition. But now the usual Cabinet re-arrangement, the time honoured resort of both French and British political parties in moments of difficulty, is no longer possible; for in their heart of hearts they are aware that they can no longer re-shuffle these very dog-eared cards, since there is only one ace in the pack. That there is wide-spread dissatisfaction there can be no doubt; and perhaps as many as a third of those who voted for the Government felt no confidence in it, and would indeed have preferred to vote against it had there been within their limited field of vision any practical alternative.

The situation may be likened to that of a Suburban middle-class family whose slender resources now permit them to have only one domestic servant, their "General." She is the person that everyone looks to and on whom everything rests, but she arouses universal dissatisfaction in the family; for she breaks the crockery, everything comes to pieces in her hand and, finally, she cannot cook; all her efforts at roasting are either blood or tears. These people have never known any problem other than the "servant problem." In their parlour they hold a parley about this problem, but all their misgivings are swept away by the mistress of the house, who says, "If we do sack her, we shall never get another maid." This painful situation in the middle-class parlour was repeated last month in the middle-class Parliament.

The dissatisfaction of Parliament is small compared to that of public opinion, which is well ahead of the present House of Commons, and knows that there is a very considerable basis for this dissatisfaction. The series of military reverses have caused a great disquiet. Even more anxiety is evoked by the operation of this Government's foreign policy. Its war aims are mainly hidden, but whatever of them peeps out is provenly reactionary. They appear to be fostering, as the alternative to Hitler and Nazism in Germany, a capitalist Germany ruled by men of the type of Rauschnig and Otto Strasser. These ex-Nazis and others of similar type in the other European countries are apparently regarded as suitable candidates for the type of post-war Government that the British Government would support. The continued hostility to the U.S.S.R. and the ill-disguised efforts to embroil it in a struggle with Nazi Germany are the foreign policy not merely of the Government, but more especially of the whole ruling class, a section of which appears to hope that by these means a deal could be done with Hitler and the Nazis and an Anglo-German peace negotiated with a view to a joint war against the Soviet Union. Finally, the refusal of independence to India and the growing suppression of popular movements in that country are in most glaring contrast to the professed aims of a struggle for freedom against tyranny, of democracy against autocratic rule, of the liberation of subjugated and oppressed nationalities.

Dissatisfaction in the home policy of the British Government is found in nearly every field. The disorganisation of production and economy (now expressed by the big industrialists themselves and by the *Times*, which, however, proposes as a remedy the supercession of local authorities), the widespread profiteering, the scandal of A.R.P. and food supplies, waste of man-power, have all aroused increasing dissatisfaction.

The official parties in Parliament see no alternative to Churchill; and this is their real failure, that they do not see the forces of the people in the country. The working class movement is becoming more and more dissatisfied, but this movement was not voiced at all in the debate. An amendment moved by myself and Mr. Gallacher was not taken, indeed no amendments were taken, nor was there an opportunity to speak in the discussion. The result was something that every member of the Labour Party and of the Co-Operative Party should take very seriously to heart, that the undoubted widespread dissatisfaction was not voiced. In fact the running in that debate was made chiefly by Mr. Lloyd George and the "National Liberal" Tory, Mr. Hore-Belisha. It might have been a debate held during the Boer War as far as any effective expression of working-class opinion was concerned.

Yet the working-class, as everyone knows, is the national driving force which can play and must play the biggest rôle in the future. Comments after the debate were noticeable enough. The Tory-Liberal-Labour Coalition and its whole wide-spread machinery, which confines and regiments opinion, and suppresses criticism, has destroyed the customary forms of expression, and then, if you please, commentators express astonishment at the extraordinary "vacuum" in the atmosphere! It is really an odd situation, that a Government with so many faults should

continue to exist only because there is not yet clear enough to the vast majority the type of alternative. But there is an alternative possible, which the movement of the People's Convention has come into being to realise. It is clear that the only way out of this present very serious situation is for the working class to end the policy of "Coalition," and to take the leading rôle in building a powerful independent popular opposition capable of winning widespread support from all sections of the mass of the people. On that basis there could be established a Government that would carry out immediately the obviously necessary measures. What are these necessary measures?

First there is the whole situation in production, the inability of the present Government to increase the home production of food because it dare not touch the privileges of the Landlords, together with the chaotic situation which even the newspapers report from time to time as existing in factories*; and of which vast numbers of workers have daily experience.

Secondly, there is the necessity for a radical change in foreign policy which would include an entirely different orientation towards the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the Republic of China and the Peoples of India.

Thirdly, amid the worsening situation of this Spring and Summer, new hope can only be built upon a Government which shows it is able to lead the way and bring the British people out of this present crisis.

It is on these urgent and immediate issues that action is required, but no such action will be taken until the Coalition is ended by the building of a powerful independent opposition. This is the main task before the mass of the people of this country.

Those who still cherish the illusion that they may get something from the Labour Party under its present leadership instead of turning to the People's Convention movement, would do well to study the declarations of the Labour Party's National Executive to be submitted to the forthcoming annual conference in London.

There they will of course read of no change in the decision already taken to suppress the voice of the local Labour Parties by refusing to allow any resolutions to be proposed. On the other hand they will find that the National Executive itself has sought to find an answer to the dissatisfaction by painting a picture of a beautiful world that is unknown

* In the *Daily Telegraph* of 17th May, Mr. A. H. Brockhurst, a managing director of a firm engaged exclusively since the beginning of the war on the production of munitions, records his protest against "The whole national policy which still seeks to reach maximum output of war supplies without seriously interfering with the competitive, individual and profit-making basis of our industrial system." He says in so many words:

"My firm desires only to produce and to keep on producing, but we are daily forced to do things which are contrary to the public interest and to omit doing things which would be in the public interest, because the system imposes upon us, as a first consideration, the need for making our own living, insuring our future, and securing our financial stability."

The facts referred to are common knowledge: and it is only their public expression by a managing director that is less common.

to ordinary people and is certainly not to be found in this island at the moment. Last year at Bournemouth, on the eve of their entry into the Churchill Government, they made extensive promises of Socialism, not only after the war, but even during the war and rightaway. It must have been an awkward problem for my former colleagues to think out an answer to the question, "what about this Socialism you promised?" In the end they decided to grapple boldly with it by the simple declaration that there was socialism now, and that they had therefore fulfilled their promises. Under the heading, "The Peace, prepare now," they assert the necessity to transfer to peace-time the solutions of war-time. They say, "As we prevent profiteering in war, so we can prevent it in peace." The miners and the railwaymen, the engineers and the munition workers, workers in transport of all kinds, the agricultural labourers and the textile operatives may well ponder this claim that the National Executive of the Labour Party has prevented profiteering. The housewives can look to their own experiences and so can everyone else. But they go on to say, "As we prevent exploitation in war, so also can we prevent it in peace." It would seem Milton's words indeed have come true: that "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war" and, it may be added, "no less imaginary."

They actually go on to say, "We reaffirm the principles of our socialist faith we are bound to insist that just as they are the basis of triumph in the war, so they are also the condition of unity in peace." So it is on the basis of socialism that Mr. Churchill and Sir Andrew Duncan and new Baron Leathers and Mr. Amery are conducting the war. That is interesting enough: an even more interesting illusion is that the three years unity of classes of the post war period, to which both Mr. Churchill and the Labour leaders have referred, is to be conducted as a socialist unity. This appears to mean that Mr. Churchill and the leaders of the Tory party, the big industrialists, the capitalist opponents of socialism, the bankers, the stockbrokers and all the others of the ruling class are going to be socialists. Truly it is a beautiful picture.

Do the leaders of the Labour Party believe that this farrago of unrealities is going to be accepted in the working class movement or treated as the voice of the people? I do not believe it for a moment. But in order that the real voice of the people shall be heard it is necessary that from the workshops and the mines, from the Trade Union branches and the Co-Operative organisations, from all the groupings and associations of the wider mass of the people, there shall come not only the repudiation of this false leadership, but insistent demands to meet the crying needs of the people. And that demand to be effective has to be expressed in the building of wide, popular and powerful opposition, for which the People's Convention has shown the way.

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INDIA—A Call to the British People

BY HARRY POLLITT

IN NO ASPECT of its policy does the Churchill Government reveal such downright incompetence and stupidity, even from the point of view of its own imperialist interests, as in its handling of the Indian question. The recent speech of Mr. Amery has quite rightly set Indian public opinion aflame with indignation that such crude Brummagem Brass methods should be thought good enough to try out once again on the Indian people. For centuries the historic policy in foreign affairs, particularly of British Imperialism, has been that of "Divide and Rule." The diehard Tories especially thought they had brought this policy to such a fine art that no one would ever be able to see through their supposed cleverness. But this time Amery has overdone it; and sections of opinion of the most moderate character in India have been shocked out of their illusions by the blatant pursuit of this policy at the present time.

It is clear to every one that British Imperialism is in a desperate situation in the conduct of the war against its trade rival, Nazi Germany. One might have thought that this would have prompted a more discreet and delicate handling of the Indian situation. But the Tories learn nothing and forget nothing when it comes to dealing with what they still look upon as a subject people. Incidentally they bring the same mentality to bear on their outlook on the Soviet Union, with all the consequences that this too has brought in its train. So we get the spectacle of the most notorious Imperialist in the Tory Party being placed in charge of India on behalf of the Churchill Government. Naturally such an appointment did not tend to create in India any impression that this war was in any way different from previous imperialist struggles.

The Indian people know only too well that the claim to fight for freedom and democracy is all very well as a means of deceiving peoples as to the real motives of war. But it cannot deceive them; because, strange as it may appear, the Indians believe that the test of this is how far you are prepared to apply it in those countries where you have the power to do so immediately. The Indian people have not been blind to the propaganda which declares "that when Britain has won the war, then freedom will be restored to Belgium, Holland, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc."; nor are they blind to the fact that the Churchill Government which sponsors this type of propaganda and uses the B.B.C. and the R.A.F. for the purpose of appeals to the people of those countries to revolt against Nazism, itself suppresses with an iron hand any attempt on the part of Indians to try and realise their aims of independence and their right to govern their own country in the way they conceive best in the