

AN ELECTION SURVEY OF EUROPE

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Is it possible to discover certain general tendencies and common traits in the elections that have recently occurred in England, Italy, Germany, and France? To be sure, political, economic, and social conditions are different in each of these countries, and the methods of voting, which necessarily have some influence on results, also vary. Women vote in England and Germany, and take an active part in political campaigns. Their weight is sufficient to determine the outcome in either country. We are told, for example, that they contributed materially to the strength of the Nationalist polls in Germany. If women possessed the ballot in France, as they certainly will some day, it is reasonable to infer that the cost of living would have been an even more important campaign issue than it actually proved to be.

What characterizes the French elections first of all is an emphatic return to the political alignments that preceded the war. We have elected a Chamber in 1924 that does not differ materially from the Chamber chosen ten years ago, in 1914. It was that earlier Chamber, where the Parties of the Left had an unquestioned majority and the understanding between the Radicals and the Socialists was very close, which, when it had been in existence only a few months, received the shock of Germany's declaration of war. That was the Chamber that fought the war. Socialists joined the Ministry. This Legislature and the Cabinets to which it gave its confidence bore the burden

of war without flinching, and carried the country to victory. That is a fact upon which we cannot lay too much stress.

The elections that immediately followed our victory, in the very midst of its intoxication, caused an abrupt shifting toward the Right. The National Bloc, which won such a signal triumph in that campaign, was the fruit of an effort to form a new party by reconciling the old differences that had divided formerly hostile groups. But to create a great political party worthy of the name, able to live and to thrust its roots deep into national life, takes much time, much labor, and much personal sacrifice.

The leaders of the National Bloc have had reason to realize that it is harder to use success than to win it. After a victory resulting from a unique concurrence of transient circumstances, it is all-important not to forget that special circumstances speedily change, and the victories they give are often short-lived. The abnormal conditions following the war gradually disappeared. Each country resumed more or less rapidly its normal habits of life and thought. Political alliances formed during or immediately after the war yielded to the older and solidier combinations that had preceded them. They could not live and grow except by supplanting what had gone before; and, either for want of skillful leaders or under the compulsion of circumstances, they failed to do this.

Such a situation is not peculiar to

France. England was not able to preserve the Coalition that for a time united the Conservatives and part of the Liberals under the sceptre of Lloyd George. That transitory and paradoxical alliance — considering the ancient and powerful traditions of the British Empire — came to an end. When the war was over and the treaty signed, each party wished to recover its old independence. The ill-matched team, so to speak, kicked over the traces, and its Welsh driver was unable, with all his dexterity, to keep it in the shafts.

So England too has resumed the political course she followed before the war, except for changes caused by the growth of the Labor Party. That party, which now ranks second in strength, has taken the place formerly held by the Liberals, and will probably encroach more and more upon the territory of its predecessor. So the future of the Liberal Party is unpromising. If, in a crisis, its leaders should adopt a positive policy, they would run the risk of seeing their following desert them, some to the Conservatives, and others to the Socialists. We should not forget that Premier MacDonald's Ministry already contains several converts from Liberalism. Their intelligence, culture, and political experience make them the most valuable lieutenants he has.

While the French elections exhibited a decided shifting toward the Left, precisely the reverse occurred in Germany. All that the Parties of the Right and Centre lost in France was gained by the Radicals and Socialists. In Germany all that was lost by the Parties of the Left — Socialists, Democrats, and Clericals — has gone to either the Nationalists on the extreme Right or the Communists on the extreme Left. And the gains of the Nationalists exceed the gains of the Communists both in numbers and in political significance. This drift to the Right is by no means a new

phenomenon in post-war Germany. It has manifested itself in every election since the Armistice. At each the Left has lost ground. Only the Clericals, with their powerful organization and use of the confessional argument, have been able to hold their followers.

German voters show this disposition to desert the leaders of the Left because the latter have been in power during a critical period, when they have made themselves responsible for many of the difficulties and disasters that have afflicted the country. The collapse of the mark has ruined the middle classes and overturned the whole social hierarchy from top to bottom. It has made the rich poor and the poor rich. *Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles*. Shifty sharpers have profited by speculating on the fall of the mark, and some of them have won fortunes that dazzle the imagination. As in all such crises, the middle classes — civil servants, retired business men, pensioners, and other people with moderate fixed incomes — have suffered the worst. Falling exchange and skyrocketing prices have weighed like a nightmare upon the country. They have ruined dispositions, wrecked business morals, aggravated domestic discord, and created dangerous undercurrents of discontent.

Naturally the opposition parties, particularly the extremists on the Right and on the Left, have taken advantage of this. We must add to these grievances the anger caused by our occupation of the Ruhr, which has been sedulously cultivated by a campaign of falsification and calumny.

Under such conditions, the opponents of the Left had an easy task. All they needed to do was to denounce the blunders and weakness of the Cabinet. Most of their attacks struck home. So the Government parties have met defeat.

Our difficulties in France since the war are not to be compared with those in Germany. They are just as actual, to be sure, and of the utmost gravity — especially our financial predicament. Our taxpayers have had to bear an enormous burden to rebuild the devastated regions, because Germany has defaulted. The logical result has been to depreciate our exchange and thereby to raise the cost of living, which directly affects everyone. In order to meet the crisis, we were forced to vote new taxes only a few weeks before the elections.

It is unnecessary to look beyond the high cost of living and heavy taxes for the discontent that manifests itself everywhere, both in the cities and in the country. And the discontented always vote against the Government.

In Germany as well as France new political forces are rising to ascendancy. But the men put in office by these forces will soon learn that it is infinitely easier to criticize a Ministry than to conduct one. If the German Nationalists enter a Cabinet, they will have to show their cards. They must say definitely and unambiguously whether they accept the Dawes Report or not. If they accept it, why did they blame their predecessors for doing so? If they reject it, they will have to take the consequences — offend England and weld her closer than ever to France, debase the Rentenmark so laboriously stabilized, and do many other things that no reasonable man will venture with a light heart.

Our Radicals in France condemn M. Poincaré violently for his financial policy, new taxes, and the *décrets-lois*, which they say violate our constitutional liberties and the rights of parliament. While we must admit that this criticism is theoretically justified, we should bear in mind that M. Poincaré did not adopt these measures because he liked them, but because he was com-

pelled to do so. Our financial crisis, the imperative necessity of protecting the franc from complete demoralization, made it absolutely necessary to increase the Government's income and diminish its outgo. How could that be done? If the *décrets-lois* were a poor device for doing this, some other way must be discovered immediately.

M. Poincaré was criticized bitterly for the occupation of the Ruhr. There again it was merely a question of the choice of means. His political opponents will quickly realize this the moment they are in power. Would they assume responsibility for evacuating the Ruhr and trusting to the unguaranteed promises of Germany? If, as we have only too much reason to fear, Germany should default in her promises, the responsibility would be crushing.

In fact, conditions govern men much more than men govern conditions. That is true of politics and diplomacy, and still more true of economics and finance. The new French Cabinet will discover within twenty-four hours of taking office that it is face to face with the same compelling problems that the old Cabinet vainly tried to solve. If it sticks rigidly to its preconceived programme, if it indulges in the slightest liberality at the expense of the public purse to either Government employees or taxpayers, it will open a spigot through which the treasury will soon run dry. Then it will be forced to choose between two things: to increase revenues by levying new taxes, or to resort to some form of public borrowing. In the latter case the franc will again plunge downward.

Italy's political evolution, and to some extent that of Spain, have entered a phase where a dictatorship set up by force has supplanted a discredited parliament, has vigorously restored public order, and has over-

thrown a tyranny of Communists and anarchists.

Fascism is primarily a reaction from an even worse evil. The middle classes, instead of surrendering as they did in Russia and letting themselves be dispossessed of their property and then destroyed, rallied resolutely to defend their rights. They formed military organizations well supplied with money — the nerves of war — and strictly disciplined, and offered battle to the Communists, replying to violence with violence, and returning with interest every blow that they received. When this Fascist organization reached a certain point of development, its leader, a man of resolution and decision, promptly seized power, and held it firmly. He ignored parliament, and for the time being practically suppressed its functions.

When public order was fully restored, business was reviving, and confidence in the stability of the Government was reestablished, both at home and abroad, Mussolini appealed to the country, and the voters responded as they ordinarily do to the authors of a triumphant *coup d'état*. They endorsed the dictator and his lieutenants by a formidable majority.

The soul of Fascism is hatred of Communism and detestation of the excesses and disorders that accompany it — of incessant strikes and violent outbreaks that endanger the property, personal safety, and even the lives of citizens. Russia is the only European land where Communism has survived. But geographically, economically, and socially she is only partially European. Everywhere else a very brief experience with soviet government and a dictatorship of the proletariat has provoked the other classes to immediate resistance, if necessary to civil war, and they have speedily crushed the Communist movement.

With slight variations that is what has happened in Germany, in Hungary, and in Italy. If parliament lacks the vigor and energy to perform this service, the endangered nation instinctively resorts to a dictator — and always finds a man for the job.

France is, of all European countries, the land where private property is the most subdivided and the most equally distributed. If we compare the condition of the common people of France — the working classes and salaried employees in town and country — with the same classes in England, Germany, or Italy, we discover marked differences. Practically no poor people in France are utterly pauperized. Rare is the French workingman who does not own some property, however modest.

For this reason Communism does not threaten us as much as it does some of our neighbors. But we cannot say that this danger is entirely absent. Conditions may arise where the laboring proletariat in the strictest sense of the word might be reinforced by a bourgeois proletariat that felt even more keenly than the former the constantly rising cost of living. This is the political peril that lurks in mounting prices. It is the most dangerous and disquieting evil society can face. It is an evil that must be combated by every means.

A study of the Cabinets now in power — or likely to take office within a few days — in France, Germany, and England, reveals one trait common to all of them: they are politically unstable, they lack a homogeneous majority. The Labor Cabinet in England lives by the tolerance of the Liberals. Should the latter refuse it their votes, it would be overthrown at once. Whatever Cabinet may hold power in Germany, whether the Nationalists take part in it or not, will likewise of necessity owe

its existence to a coalition of several factions. In France the Radicals, though by far the most numerous group in the Chamber, do not make a majority except with the support of either the Socialists or the Left Republicans.

One might assume that such a situation will in each case result in a weak and vacillating administration. But this kind of instability is a disadvantage of more theoretical than practical importance. Moreover, except in England, it is not new. French and German Cabinets have nearly always been founded on coalitions. *Concentration* has become a familiar term in our parliamentary vocabulary. The last French Chamber was unusual in this respect, for the National Bloc commanded an indisputable majority. That was a transitory exception, however, which, like most exceptions, only confirms the rule.

Our marked shifting to the Left in France is the best answer the country could give to the charge of nationalism and imperialism launched against us almost everywhere, particularly in England and America. Pro-German propaganda — which, let me add, is not always conducted by Germans — made great capital of this accusation. For example, it was so skillfully exploited at the Washington Conference as to prejudice American opinion against France, although the general

sentiment of that country is so cordial and sympathetic toward our people. Its propagandists portrayed France as a reactionary, belligerent country, a disturber of European peace, dreaming of nothing but gore and bloodshed, and maintaining a huge army far beyond its means for the sake of annihilating, of trampling underfoot, its poor, vanquished adversary, peace-loving Germany.

These absurd accusations won general credit. How often newspaper articles and Congressional and Parliamentary debates in both England and America have brought us their echoes. We made futile efforts to refute them, to show how foolish they were, to prove by actual figures that we were spending less upon our army and navy than England and the United States. We appealed in vain to the fundamentally democratic and pacific character of our people. Either we were not believed at all, or we were only half believed.

Now the facts themselves — that is, the elections — have demonstrated so that all the world can see the true attitude and feeling of the nation. Henceforth no one can honestly accuse us of militarism and imperialism. Moreover, every Frenchman, whatever his political preferences, whether he is an admirer of M. Poincaré or of M. Herriot, knows that neither of these statesmen is more militarist than the other.

MUSSOLINI ON DEMOCRACY

BY THE VERY REVEREND W. R. INGE

[We follow the Italian article upon Mussolini and Machiavelli in our issue of June 28 with this exposition of the same theme by the versatile Dean of St. Paul's, because the present revival of that disparagement of popular virtue and intelligence that characterizes Machiavelli's political philosophy appears to be one of the significant phenomena of the times.]

From the *Morning Post*, June 8
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SIGNOR MUSSOLINI avows himself a disciple of Machiavelli. 'The Prince,' he says, 'is the statesman's supreme guide. His doctrine is alive to-day because in the course of four hundred years no deep changes have occurred in the minds of men or in the actions of nations.'

And what, according to Mussolini, is the doctrine of Machiavelli? Politics is the art of leading, utilizing, and educating the passions, desires, and interests of men for the benefit of the general order. Men are more inclined to submit to him who makes himself dreaded than to him who strives to be loved. Friendship of this kind, being a mere moral tie, cannot endure against the calculations of interest, whereas fear carries with it the dread of punishment, which never loses its influence. 'It is necessary for anyone who establishes a republic to presuppose that all men are bad, and that they will always apply the malignity of their mind when they have an opportunity. Men never work for good except under compulsion.'

'If,' says Mussolini, 'I am permitted to judge my fellow creatures and contemporaries, I cannot in any way depart from the conclusions of Machiavelli. In fact, I have to be even more severe.' This severity he proceeds to illustrate. While individuals tend to

social decay, the State represents organization. The individual continually attempts to disobey the laws. He hates to pay taxes, and endeavors to avoid his obligations to service in war. There are very few heroes who are prepared to sacrifice themselves on the altar of the State, though there are many willing to upset the altar for their own purposes. Democracy is folly, as is shown by the fact that it is discarded at once when the nation is in danger. When the supreme interests of the people are at stake, even the most democratic governments take care not to submit them to the judgment of the people. 'Armed prophets' — he quotes from Machiavelli — 'conquer; those who are unarmed are ruined. Therefore it is well to arrange things so that when people no longer believe they can be made to believe through force.'

The political crudity of this declaration is amazing. It is as foolish as the utterances of James I, who, when his subjects had already determined to make the monarchy constitutional, was good enough to inform them that 'though a good king will frame his actions according to the law, he is not bound thereto, but of his own good-will and for good example to his subjects. For he is master over every person, having power over life and death.' A