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Belgian Stalinists and "Socialists"- Block Election Victory of Workers

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Date de mise en ligne : vendredi 11 octobre 2024

Date de parution : 22 février 1946

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From *The Militant*, Vol. X No. 10, 9 March 1946, p. 3.

Transcribed & marked up by Einde O'Callaghan for the *Marxists' Internet Archive*.

BRUSSELS, Belgium, Feb. 22 – The legislative elections on February 17 led to a paradox in its results. In the House of Representatives, the government coalition of the Socialist Party, Communist (Stalinist) Party, and the bourgeois Liberal party now hold a majority of 20 seats. But in the Senate the reactionary bourgeois party, the Christian Social party, gained an absolute majority.

The provincial elections of February 24 will complete the composition of the Senate, but it is extremely doubtful that the Christian Social party will be dislodged from its position. (The Christian Social Party won 344 out of 696 Councilorships in the February 24 elections. This is only eight less than the combined Councilorships won by the Socialist-Stalinist Liberal coalition. – Ed.)

How did it happen that the most reactionary bourgeois party was able to win such a victory ? No other explanation is possible than the following ; The Belgian masses, finding further radicalization blocked politically, have lost interest in politics during the past half year. This was clearly evident throughout the whole election campaign. There was not the least sign of animation in any of the large parties. Their meetings did not arouse any enthusiasm. The most complete calm reigned. The debates among the different parties were not even sharp. One had the impression of watching a comedy in which the roles were assigned in advance.

Masses Disillusioned

Whence arose this lack of interest among the working masses ? It came from the deceptions practised by their leaders – The "Socialists," and above all, The "Communists." It arose from the fact that these parties, linked by their collaboration in the government with the bourgeois "liberals" and "technicians," did not pose before the voters any question capable of arousing the interest of the workers. It came from the fact that the masses for the past year, and above all during the monarchical crisis, discovered that their "leaders" were not ready at any time to engage in genuine struggle with the bourgeoisie on any issue whatever.

This was clearly expressed in the votes of the workers. Although immediately following the "liberation" the Stalinist party was well on the way to rolling up a crushing majority of workers, now it could not obtain more than 24 seats out of 202, most of these due to petty bourgeois votes. The Socialist party, which a year and a half ago was in full disintegration, obtained 69 seats, that is, has even gained in comparison with 1939.

There is no doubt that if the Socialist and Communist (Stalinist) parties had entered the election with a clear program and with the will of jointly forming a government, excluding all bourgeois parties from power, they would have obtained a large absolute majority even at the present time. But it is more than certain that if the elections had taken place six months ago, as the Trotskyists demanded, the reaction would have received a crushing defeat.

The fact is that from the end of the monarchical crisis the Trotskyists ceaselessly warned the masses that the postponement of the elections, together with the hesitations and evasions of the reformists and Stalinists on the question of the monarchy, would prepare a victory for the Christian Social party. This party mobilized all its forces in defense of Leopold III.

Trotskyist Warning

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But if the reformist and Stalinist chiefs from the beginning of the monarchical crisis had put the King on trial, if they had published their incriminating dossier on Leopold III, if they had demonstrated before the entire country the true role of the monarchy, the Christian Social party would have been incapable of making electoral capital on the question of the monarchy.

The Reformists and Stalinists want to maintain their coalition with the bourgeoisie. They do not want to "diminish the prestige of the monarchy and of the Royal House." It is their fear of the people which prevents them from agitating on the question of the monarchy as the interests of the workers necessitate. Thus they prepared the electoral victory of the reaction.

On the basis of the present parliament it is extremely difficult for the different parties to find a solution to the governmental crisis. The coalition which has governed up to now is in danger of not obtaining a majority in the Senate. A "government of national unity," that is a coalition, widened to the Christian Social party, runs up against two difficulties. On the one hand the Christian Social party does not want the Stalinists in the government, but the reformists don't want to enter the government if the Stalinists do not likewise participate. On the other hand there exists a powerful opposition in the Belgian Socialist party as well as in the Communist Party against any collaboration with the Christian Social party. If the leaders act against the wishes of the rank and file militants, they risk provoking splits, if not grave crises.

In this political crisis the working class nevertheless has lost nothing of its militancy. Sporadic strikes broke out among the miners the day after the elections. In the bourgeois milieu and in their press one feels very well the fear of the capitalists at the possible violent reaction of the masses. That is why the bourgeoisie is doing everything it can to set up a government of "national unity" to which the reformist and Stalinist leaders will be tied even more tightly than in the past.

The Trotskyist slogan, "No coalition with the bourgeoisie," remains therefore more timely than ever. At the same time the correctness of our demand, Abolition of the Reactionary Senate, which we were the only ones to advance before the election, was quickly confirmed by events. The Trotskyists now say to the workers : There is no reason for your being demoralized. It is not you who were beaten in the election, but the false politics of your leaders. Your struggle must be continued in the field proper to it, the field of class action. There you will be victorious.

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