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Britain

After the Landslide: Resistance and Realignment

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Anti*Capitalist Resistance statement on the General Election: Tories annihilated, Labour have a 'loveless' landslide, and hard-right Farage surges. There is a challenge from the left and on Gaza: organise the resistance now.

1 – The overwhelming majority of people will be glad to see the humiliation and annihilation of the Tories. They have lost the greatest number of seats in their history. Conservative governments have given us 14 years of misrule, corruption, and dishonesty. Cameron and the Lib Dems' austerity ended or devastated the lives of millions. In 2010 there were 35 foodbanks; in 2024 there are 3,572. Our health service, education, local services, utilities, and much else has been starved of vital funds or pillaged for private gain. Our rivers and seas stink and are unfit for swimming while water company shareholders have been lavishly rewarded. Johnson's callous disregard for public health resulted in thousands of needless Covid deaths. Rules were imposed on us and not followed by the government. He gave millions to Tory cronies to provide unsuitable PPE. Liz Truss's extreme neo-liberal budget led to millions suffering massive mortgage rises. Getting Brexit done has hit growth hard and stopped European freedom of movement. On Sunak's watch, energy prices have soared and we have experienced the worst cost of living crisis for decades. The demonisation of migrants, asylum seekers, and trans people has been stepped up. We can at least savour for a moment the political defeat of the politicians responsible for it all. Truss, Shapps, Mordaunt, Gullis, Rees-Mogg, Jenkyns and other ministers are all gone. Sunak has suffered a reverse 2019, this time the Farage party damaged the Tories, not Labour.

2 – Starmer's new government has been welcomed by big business. The Economist, the Financial Times, and the Murdoch press have supported Labour at this election. When Starmer said he changed the party so that he could change the country he was half truthful. One sure way to get into power is to destroy any possible left challenge to the power of the capitalist class who really runs things. Yes, he changed his party but his new partnership with capital for 'wealth creation' will not change the country for the many. It will help streamline profit-making for the few. Public money will be lavished on business to encourage 'growth' that will supposedly magically trickle down to improve wages and social spending. Corporate staff have already been embedded throughout his cabinet team to ensure this vision will be implemented.

3 – Labour's big election victory follows the vicious counterattack of the Labour Party's right and centre against any hint of a moderate left challenge to the power of capital. Starmer's hold over the workers' movement has been strengthened. Any re-run of a Corbyn-like left majority inside Labour is dead in the water – and will be for the foreseeable future. For a while, the new government will probably enjoy a honeymoon period in which it may be difficult for tensions or conflicts with the unions or the left to emerge.

4 – However, this result is a Conservative collapse as much as a Labour win. One journalist has correctly called it a 'loveless landslide'. The unfair First Past the Post system massively distorts the degree of Labour's triumph. Yesterday it got 9.6 million votes and around 34% of the vote. The Corbyn party he claimed was preventing any electoral victory got 13 million votes and 40% of the vote in 2017 and 10 million and 32% in a 2019 election that was distorted by Brexit and the de facto Johnson/Farage electoral coalition. In Cymru, there was little enthusiasm for Starmer. In fact, despite winning 27 out of 32 seats, Labour received nearly 150,000 fewer votes than in 2019 when Jeremy Corbyn was leader. In the poorest communities, such as Ely and Caerau, the turnout was only 23%. Everyone has noted the lack of enthusiasm for the Starmer project. Turnout is down seven percentage points on 2019 at around 60%. Workers' struggles are more likely to develop in this climate where there is not a strong identity with the government. There is less enthusiasm than with Blair in 1997. However, this new government has already indicated that it will not pay public sector workers a decent wage, nor will it raise taxes on the rich to pay for Health, Education, Social Care, or local council spending needs. It is very likely that workers will strike against this

government, and many others will campaign against the limits of its programme. It is unlikely to break with US imperialism with regard to Israel's apartheid state. Unlike Spain and Ireland, it will not recognise the Palestine state now. The significant vote to Labour's left shows there is potential for resistance to its moderate policies.

5 – We must support every struggle or resistance to the policies of this social-liberal government. We do not recognise any honeymoon. To start with we demand the immediate implementation of its very limited programme with no further backtracking – increased rights for workers from day one, the progressive taxes they have proposed on private schools and non-doms; ditching the Rwanda project, its measures for education, health, and the environment.

6 – But this is just the starting point for the workers' movement to force the government to take much more radical measures – extending labour rights by abolishing all of Thatcher's repressive legislation; a wealth tax and increased capital gains tax to pay for our NHS, education, and local services; taking the energy and utility companies into common ownership and using any surplus generated to develop a much more ambitious energy transition plan to tackle the climate and ecological crises in ways that ensure the polluters pay; removing the two-child cap and other benefit caps immediately and strengthening the 2010 Equality Act to better protect the oppressed (including trans people) while ditching the repressive Public Order laws. These are just a few examples, but such proposals go alongside the mobilisation of workers in these sectors to draw up action plans. We do not just put pressure on Labour but try and develop independent self-organisation on all these issues.

7 – Yesterday's general election results show that up to 3 million voted to the left of Labour, either for a Green manifesto more radical than Labour's or for left independents or candidates challenging Labour on Palestine. The Greens alone got 6.8% (up by 4), nearly 2 million votes, and now have 4 MPs. Independent pro-Gaza candidates won four seats and ran Labour close in seats like Wes Streeting's in Ilford North. Andrew Feinstein got over 8,000 votes in Starmer's constituency, Faiza Shaheen in Chingford got 25%, and would have won if Labour had not split the vote against Duncan Smith. Corbyn, in the end, won comfortably. We have never seen so many independents in parliament. A weakened left still remains inside Labour like the Grassroots Alliance, Momentum, and the Socialist Campaign Group. These thousands of activists inside and outside Labour provide the basis of a more structured network or movement of ecosocialist and climate activists who are prepared to resist Starmer's failure to put forward the change we need. The direct action current of the green movement such as Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion occupy this political space too. The greater-than-expected performance of all these forces provides us with some hope that a triumphant Starmer government will not steam ahead without any opposition. At the beginning of the campaign, he wanted to dump Britain's first black woman MP. He was stopped by a grassroots campaign linking up with Left MPs, unions, and the world of culture. There is no reason that such alliances cannot be constructed on other issues. The big majority may make it easier for MPs to defy the Labour leadership – their rebellions will not bring down the government. Every commentator and poll have pointed to both a very strong desire to get rid of the Tories but combined with little enthusiasm for Starmer and his project. So people may be willing to challenge the government much sooner than we may imagine. Even the big success of the Lib Dems, up to 71 seats, partly reflects a desire to properly fund health and social care which goes beyond Labour's limited spending plans.

8 – Farage's racist Reform party was, after Starmer, the surprise winner of the night. It has 4 seats and over 4 million votes. The score is over 3 points better than its previous high point in 2015. Reform came second in hundreds of seats, including in some Labour ones. Farage's main message after the vote was that he aimed to overtake the Tory party and become the main opposition to Labour. He is in a position to play a role in the realignment of right-wing politics, either through a reverse takeover of the Tory party or through a new movement that will confront traditional Toryism and win over some of its base and MPs. This process has already started. It is also a threat to the Starmer government. Farage has said he wants to be the real opposition leading mass protests. Given the small number of his MPs relative to the millions of votes he is in a good place to exploit the frustrations of his base who feel alienated from the political process. Labour, for narrow electoral reasons, did not challenge Farage, thinking he would wound the Tories more than Labour. Starmer even withdrew its candidate from the battle in Clacton. Labour, as much as the

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Tories, bear responsibility for the rise of Reform. Labour has normalised the racist framework of the debate on migrants. It will be up to the left and the workers' movement to confront a rising Farage current. His success will also strengthen the confidence of neo-fascist street gangs led by Tommy Robinson and others.

9 – Ecological issues were mostly absent from the campaign. Labour had already diluted its Great British Energy project campaign and did not foreground it – being terrified that voters might be scared off by its costs. Both the Liberal Democrats, who soared beyond even the exit poll to 71 seats, and the Greens benefited from putting the environment on the agenda. The left needs to step up and lead on an eco-socialist strategy. The other great absence from the electoral campaign was Gaza. The mainstream parties barely mentioned it but the standing of independent candidates completely disrupted this. We salute the work of all those activists who succeeded in getting the voice of Palestinians heard in this election.

10 – The ACR will put itself at the service of building resistance to Labour's social liberalism. We will support every campaign to defend trans, women's, and democratic rights, Palestine, workers' living standards, and public services and to push for strong measures to tackle the climate and ecological crisis along with a just transition to green jobs. Within the broad movement, we will argue for the need for an anti-capitalist eco-socialist current that can provide the basis for a strategic alternative to Labourism.

5 July 2024

[ACR statement, General Election 2024.](#)

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