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After British election, urgent need for fight against racism

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Thousands in Glasgow, Scotland, protested the electoral victory of British ultrarightist Boris Johnson, Dec. 13.

The Dec. 12 British election was a contest between the reactionary, arch-racist Boris Johnson of the Conservative (Tory) Party and Jeremy Corbyn, who is representative of the most progressive wing of the British Labour Party.

Johnson hung his electoral hat on the racist anti-immigrant campaign that provided the wind in the sails for Brexit – the push to separate Britain from the European Union.

Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, is a longtime target of reactionary attacks by the British media and Tory politicians. During the runup to the election, the campaign against him reached a new level with the entirety of the British corporate press joining in. Charges of anti-Semitism, because of his longtime support for the Palestinian struggle, were central.

Corbyn's Labour Party still won nearly 33 percent — more than 10 million votes — compared to 43 percent for Johnson. In addition, many workers in Northern Ireland and Scotland voted for parties that have historically struggled for independence from British imperialism.

Over the years, Corbyn has taken some courageous positions: opposing the imperialist war against Syria, calling for denuclearization of the British military, calling for a minimum 50 percent tax on the richest 1 percent, national rent control legislation, scrapping tuition fees, strengthening collective bargaining and a national living wage bill.

Almost all of these proposals enjoyed [majority or close to majority support](#), according to various polls of voters.

Even though more than 10 million people voted for Corbyn in the face of a storm of reactionary attacks, he is being singled out for criticism for the electoral loss. The nature of the criticisms varies, but few — if any — have raised the most important question in the aftermath of the election: whether a full-court press against the racism of Boris Johnson and all-out solidarity with Arab, Asian and African immigrants and other migrant workers in Britain could have strengthened the electoral chances of Labour.

It may have, and more importantly, even if such a solidarity-building campaign did not win out over the barrage of right-wing propaganda against Corbyn in this election, it could have strengthened the entire British working class in preparation

for struggles that are sure to come in the future.

Needed: solidarity against anti-immigrant racism

The 1993 consolidation of the European Union included in its constitution a lessening of the restrictions on cross-border movement between member countries.

In recent years, large numbers of migrant workers have moved to England from those European countries where stronger and left-led unions have won better protections and better wages. Where minimum wage laws are higher there is also higher competition for those jobs. The migration to England has been prompted by the hopes for a better chance of finding work.

As endless imperialist wars and economic sanctions have caused devastation, joblessness and hunger, hundreds of thousands of working-class people in Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe have fled their ravaged homelands at great peril, to try to find survival in the U.S. and Western Europe.

Boris Johnson gained support by railing against the lighter immigration restrictions of the European Union and by spewing racist hate. His tirades gained him the support of the section of the British ruling class pushing for Brexit and won him the leadership of the Tories, and then the majority of seats in Parliament on Dec. 12.

Johnson is a notorious racist, considered by many to be the second coming of Enoch Powell, a Tory MP whose infamous, fascist “Rivers of Blood” speech in 1968 spurred outrage, but also set the stage for tightening immigration laws in England. Johnson has made a political career out of a revival of Powell’s white nationalism and anti-immigrant racism.

Brexit and capitalist crisis

The despicable use of racism by right-wing politicians like Boris Johnson is meant to

distract from the real motivation of the pro-Brexit section of the British ruling class – the capitalist crisis.

The increase in efficiency of the productive forces, the globalization of production combined with vast improvements in the technology used to produce goods and services, has meant that fewer and fewer workers produce more and more. With fewer workers needed, the demand for labor lessens, and wages go down.

With fewer people able to buy the goods and services that they themselves have produced, it becomes more difficult for the billionaire corporate owners to sell at a profit, and the competition for markets between the capitalist countries heightens.

The last several decades have seen an intensification of this process because of the boom in globalized high-tech, and it has led to a period of constant struggle and shifting alliances to try to gain a competitive edge. Britain's "Brexiters" are hoping that a stronger economic alliance with the U.S. — the dominant imperialist power — will give them an edge against other European powers, Germany first and foremost.

The repugnant scapegoating of migrants and people of color is meant to conceal the capitalist crisis. A working-class struggle against racism is what is needed to uncover the truth and point the way forward.



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