

After the Election

The Capitalist class of the Western 'Democracies' makes clever use of parliamentary elections to keep workers under control. They try to con them into believing that it is 'the people' who decide how the country is governed, obscuring the fact that all the fundamental organs of the State remain in place whatever the election result. Furthermore the parliamentary system allows discredited governments to be speedily replaced by a fresh figurehead leadership with a new batch of empty promises.

In those parts of the world where the bourgeoisie does not have this flexibility, notably Eastern Europe, contempt for their regime is near universal and their rule is preserved by little more than pure repression - this can have explosive consequences, as demonstrated by the recent eruptions in Poland.

There can only be one response from revolutionaries to parliamentary elections: an unambiguous denunciation of the whole charade, a refusal to participate in any way and on any basis, and a call on the working class to boycott the polling booths and organise their own struggle. This is what our organisation attempted in the distribution of the leaflet which follows this article.

Why Did Thatcher Win?

When revolutionaries analyse the victory of the Conservative Party in the recent British General Election they do so for specific reasons. We are not university professors seeking to explain the minutiae of the bourgeoisie's party political pantomime and to make speculative forecasts for the future. Nor do we share the mass media's interest in the sordid progress of individual capitalist politicians' careers. Rather we seek to determine the general thrust of the bourgeoisie's political manoeuvres and their implications for the class struggle.

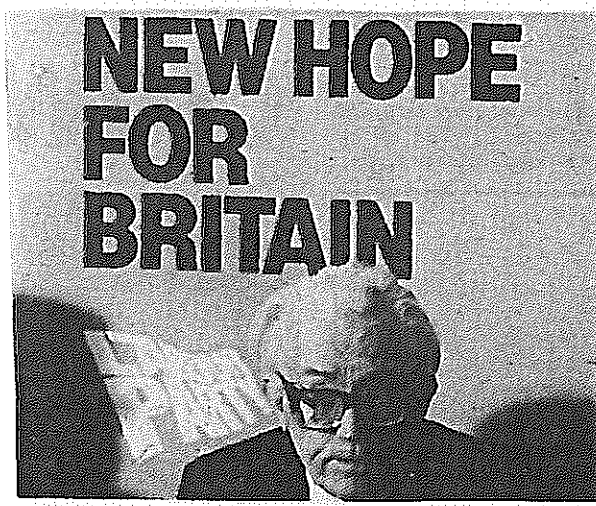
Thatcher's government has succeeded in halting the recent British trend (mirrored in many other countries) in which the party in power fails to be re-elected for a second full term. Their triumph can be ascribed to two main factors: their success in keeping workers militancy in check and the disarray of the Labour Party.

In the 1974 and 1979 elections the party in power had seen its credibility shattered by waves of unrest and strikes. In contrast Thatcher's government has experienced an almost unbroken string of successes against the working class. After some early scares against the steel workers the bosses have been firmly on top. Strikes have never looked like getting out of the control of the Unions who have "led" workers to defeat after defeat by keeping strikes isolated and sapping combativity by calling useless token stoppages - the health workers strike was a prime

example of these tactics at work.

The most potent weapon in the bosses' armoury over the past four years has been the threat of mass unemployment; whole industries have been dismantled, and those still in work have been battered into quiescence by the promise that if they struggle they will be out of a job with no hope of getting another. The carrot of an economic recovery "sometime in the future" and a return to the good old days of full employment and prosperity has been dangled in front of the workers in return for industrial peace today. Having milked the Falklands war for its full propaganda value Thatcher was quick to call an election before it became clear that there was to be no recovery and before any section of workers called her bluff and managed to break the bosses' stranglehold.

In the early 1970's revolutionaries considered the Labour Party to be the most intelligent faction of the bourgeoisie, and therefore the most likely to hold power. Labour were clear on the counterrevolutionary role of trade-unionism, understood the pivotal role of the state in all economic and social spheres and did not share the commitment of the Tory 'backwoodsmen' to the



New Hope? — No Chance!

dinosaurs or private capital. Today this evaluation must be reconsidered for it is clear that it is the Tories rather than Labour which has, thus far, more successfully come to terms with the deepening crisis. They have mounted a

selective and cunning attack on the working class (having learned the lessons of the 1970-1979 period) have been prepared to close down whole industries in the overall interests of the US bloc and have been the staunchest supporters of the American military build-up. By contrast, the Labour Party has been thrown into turmoil by the downturn in the economy. No matter how its leaders thrashed about for a vote-winning issue all they were able to serve up was a dog-eared Keynesian programme for recovery which was incredible to a large proportion of those who normally vote Labour.

Labour's decisive defeat on June 9th can be explained by simple material factors rather than by recourse to absurd theories about a huge plot by the whole capitalist class. As the crisis deepens the options open to the different factions of the bourgeoisie are narrowing. The economy is no longer generating any surplus, as it did in the 1960s and early 70s to allow left wing parties to differentiate themselves from the right through provision of new welfare measures, buying off certain militant sections of the workers etc. More and more the ONLY policies open to ANY government is a full scale austerity programme and a direct attack on the living standards of workers, as demonstrated by the current actions of the Socialist Party regime in France. Given its composition it was not surprising that the Tory party could unite behind a full frontal attack on the working class, but the Labour party has been thrown into confusion and factional infighting. Large sections of the Labour party have been unwilling to accept the adoption of the austerity measures made necessary by the crisis, being fully aware that putting such a programme into action would destroy their credibility as the 'workers party' and have instead clutched at desperate policy remedies such as virtually turning Britain into a seige economy etc. The fight within the Labour party can be expected to intensify in the months ahead; the right within the party balked by the higher echelons of the unions will (in an attempt to stop the SDP stealing their party's clothes) want to prepare for a speedy return to power on a 'moderate' ticket, while the left will want the party to retain its present policies, confident that in the fullness of time, it will eventually be called to the helm of the British state.

Whatever strategy is successful it is clear that the Labour party in opposition will try to corral outbursts of workers militancy into

support for its capitalist programme. It will be the task of revolutionaries to unmask this scheme.

Perspectives for the Coming Period

The election of June 9th was a major triumph for British Capital as yet again millions of workers trooped through the polling booths to choose their butchers. The government will claim it has a mandate for further austerity measures 'in the national interest'. The weakest sections of the working class, the unemployed and the old, will be hardest hit first, but as the crisis deepens we can all expect to come under the cosh. Spending on the repressive organs of the state will be heavily increased in preparation for fresh bouts of civil disorder and Britain will play its full part in the escalation of the the Western bloc's military arsenals.

A key part of the new government's legislative programme will be the proposed Union and Employment bills. Though they will doubtless be presented as attacks on "irresponsible trade unionism" it is clear that these measures will be aimed at outlawing wildcat strikes imposing severe penalties on strikers etc. The unions are worried that these measures could rebound and result in workers getting out of their control, a concern which will spread throughout the bourgeoisie if the class mounts a major challenge to the government. If Thatcher and her crew do come unstuck the SDP, Labour party and their assorted hangers-on will be waiting in the wings to step into the breach.

For the working class in Britain, as in every other country, the years ahead will only bring greater impoverishment. Perhaps one positive outcome of the election was that millions of workers weren't taken in by the blandishments of the Labour party and very quickly it will become clear that Thatcher cant deliver the recovery.

As we wrote in the last issue of the Bulletin the last few years have taught workers in Britain that union led strikes lead nowhere but the dole queue. At present that recognition has led to passivity rather than to workers taking the reins of the struggle into their own hands, but as it becomes clearer that there is not going to be a recovery and that the bosses will kick us in the teeth whether we fight back or not, we can expect to see the proletariat making the first tentative steps towards rejecting the logic of capitalism and fighting on its own terms. The job of revolutionaries is to ram these lessons home.

BEWARE OF ELECTION FEVER!

DOWN WITH ELECTION FRAUD

Its election time again! Once again the press and T.V. is full of the old lies and shit trying to get us to support one set of bosses against another. They've called the election now because they know they can't wait any longer before the myth of recovery is shattered and before workers' militancy (at present bubbling beneath the surface) explodes into a new 'winter of discontent'.

None of them - Labour, Tory or whatever - can hide the catastrophe facing the world any longer. All they can do is pretend they have a solution before it's too late for pretence.

INFLATION - AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The Tories present inflation triumphantly as their ace card. True, they've got it down to its lowest level in years, but what does this really mean? They know, and everybody else knows, that it's guaranteed to rise again. Every country in the world is plagued by inflation and no-one, right or left, knows how to deal with it. And we all know the real cost of this "triumph" against inflation: cuts in the 'social wage' of workers - in schools, in health care etc. and in the unspeakable desperation of mass unemployment. For the ruling class this is just an acceptable and necessary part of the price to be paid in the struggle to become more competitive in the capitalist jungle. And they're all on their knees praying that the misery the dole produces will create fear in the workers and not anger so that they can use it as a club to hammer workers into accepting MORE layoffs, MORE speed-ups and LESS wages.

THE CAPITALIST CRISIS IS WORLDWIDE - AND INESCAPABLE

For the truth is that NOBODY in the ruling class knows how to deal with unemployment. Like inflation it is worldwide and is an inescapable product of the most catastrophic crisis which has gripped the world since the '30's. Millions upon millions of workers in America, in Russia, in China, in Europe - in EVERY country - are on the dole. The conditions of working class life are worsening everywhere. Every day markets shrink and businesses go bankrupt. Entire countries like Mexico and Poland teeter on the brink of total collapse. There is no escape. Capitalism worldwide is collapsing. All the politicians offer us is lies, lies and more lies. They don't know how to stop the crisis. All they can do is try to impose policies which will make their own country more competitive on the disappearing world markets and that can only mean making our products cheaper by turning the screws on the working class. (They all neglect to mention, of course, that since sacrifices are being screwed out of workers in every country, we end up no better off).

THE LEFT, THE RIGHT AND THE UNIONS ARE AGAINST US

Make no mistake, the attacks on workers aren't just a scheme of the mad Tories. These attacks couldn't have been carried out without the co-operation of the bosses' cops on the shop floor - the unions. They agree that the national capital has

to be made more competitive. That's why they support the lay-offs and the speed-ups. That's why they destroy worker's resistance by channelling it into useless, token, one day strikes and marches. That's why they divide it into doomed sectional or local strikes and do anything to stop struggle spreading and linking up. Look at the tens of thousands of jobs lost in the shipyards and the car plants. Look at Steel - 140,000 out of 230,000 have been sacked over the past 3 years with the full co-operation of the unions. As for the Labour Party, their only real difference is that they worry about the attacks provoking uncontrollable struggle. That's why they take a "softer" line. But remember the last Labour governments started the "Tory" cuts. They put the screws to us with their Social Contract for keeping down wages. They will be no different next time.

WORLD WAR III

If the differences on economic policy between left and right are fake differences as far as workers are concerned, then so also are the squabbles they have about defence. What they are "squabbling" about are merely the details of HOW the workers will be slaughtered in the defence of the country when the time comes. So forget all the shit about Trident and Cruise etc. What's important is that they all agree that it is necessary for workers to die to defend capitalism. And if they have their way, the coming global slaughter will be unavoidable. Just like the 30's, the only end to the desperate struggle for the dwindling market will be global holocaust.

THE REAL ALTERNATIVE

That's why just refusing to vote isn't sufficient. There is an alternative to what the ruling class offers us, but we have to fight for it. We have to put our interests, workers' interests first and to hell with capitalism's interests. They want sacrifices which never end - we want work and a decent life free from poverty and fear. The choice this election is not giving us is the choice the Polish workers made at the height of their struggle - to hell with your system and your rule. If capitalism is collapsing, then good riddance. And every strike to defend our interests points the way forward to achieve this.

If capitalism is collapsing, then good riddance. We don't need it whether its of the Russian or Western variety and every strike to defend our interests points the way forward to achieve this. But we can't fight in isolation. An isolated struggle is a doomed one. It's no good sitting in our own yard, and our own industry. We'll just be picked off one by one. Each struggle must be linked up with other struggles and to other workers who haven't yet entered the struggle. The Michelin workers recently on strike in Aberdeen should have gone to the Michelin factory in Dundee to the Timex occupation and to Glasgow's Albion Plant. That's what the workers did in Poland. Each strike was immediately spread from factory to factory, from town to town and while the strikers linked up like that the bosses were powerless.

And above all, we must control our struggles ourselves and kick out the union policemen. They are against us and serve only to divide and weaken us. Mass working class struggle is the only answer to the Bosses' economic crisis: its the real contest for power that lies ahead of us, not the electoral farce on June 9th.

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