

## SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

# IS THERE LIFE AFTER THE ELECTION ?

### THATCHER'S WAR

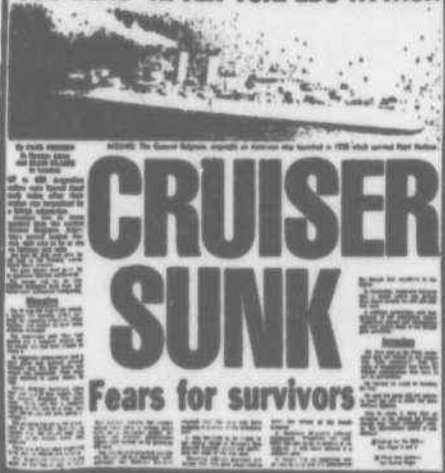
Of all the sick stories that have come out of the four years of Thatcher rule, none tells us more about the character of the woman than the story of the sinking of the General Belgrano.

It has now been well established that at the time of the sinking that (1) the ship was moving away from the Falklands and was outside the 200 mile exclusion area, and (2) Britain and Argentina were on the verge of signing a peace treaty that had been successfully negotiated through the Peruvian government.

As part of the treaty the Argentinians had agreed to withdraw their troops from the Islands

Thatcher and her war cabinet could not possibly have been ignorant of the talks or of the stage that they had reached.

#### '800 DEAD' AFTER TORPEDO ATTACK



The Belgrano could only have been sunk for one reason, because Thatcher and her cronies wanted war. A good old war to whip up a bit of the patriotic spirit. Tories have always been quick to celebrate a bit of a battle. Not so quick to go and fight in it, but then they don't have to. There's plenty of working class kids in the army to do their fighting for them, most of them probably joined to get away from the dole queues that they created.

Thatcher got her war and a big boost in the opinion polls that might well carry her through to another term of office. Not a bad deal in exchange for the odd thousand or so lives.



### OR IS IT ALL RUBBISH ?

Anybody that took an objective view of the four years of Margaret Thatcher's reign would surely come to the conclusion that the majority of people are far worse off. The most obvious example is the two million or so people who have lost their jobs, but there are plenty of others

Prescription and dental charges have more than doubled, house building is an all time low, council rents at an all time high. The waiting list for hospital treatment grows and grows. The whole thing is one big catalogue of disaster with the lower income bracket (who can least afford it) the worst hit. The Tories have given a couple of pounds to the poor in tax cuts but have cut vital services to pay for it. The rich of course get thousands in tax relief.

If you are a couple of thousand pounds better off, you don't really mind having to go private to get health treatment especially as you're already on 30 or 40 thousand a year anyway

But what use is an extra couple of pounds to a small income family in the face of the extra charges for rent, food, gas, electricity and prescriptions.

### ELECTION

And so we look to the election. Is this the chance to change things for the better

This issue is now in the forefront of everybody's minds. This is our chance to use the little bit of democracy we are allowed i.e. to vote for the government once every 5 years. Is it worth using? (this will be discussed elsewhere in the issue). If so, what can we expect to see come out of it?

It becomes quite apparent that victory in parliamentary elections does not lead to any real major change. The structure of society remains the same. What we mean by this is that people who are rich are still rich. They still own the factories, banks, land, etc. which is the source of that

wealth. And no matter whether it is Labour, Tory, Alliance there is not going to be a concerted attack on that privilege.

This we see as part of the problem with elections. The economic control of a nation is a far more powerful weapon than 326 seats in the House of

commons. This economic control is not subject to electoral control

If, or when a government is elected that tries to challenge that power, or modify it, the ruling class will use any method open to them to resist this challenge.

### DISRUPTION

They can do this in several ways. They can use their economic power by means of investment strikes which starve industry of cash, or they may move their money to another country where there is less control on them

Either way the economy is disrupted and the government weakened.

Sometimes a multinational company will simply demand that a government act in a certain way or else. This happened with the Chrysler car company of America who demanded that a Labour government give them 162 million in tax relief under threat of making all their workers unemployed and got it. Oil companies pulled the same stroke, refusing to develop the North Sea oil fields unless the taxes on their profits were cut

### FORCE

Another more ominous threat that the rich are prepared to use if all else fails is that of force. This is exactly what happened in Chile in the early seventies, when a democratically elected left wing government was overthrown by an armed coup backed by the American government

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## RED ACTION

Regular readers of Red Action will have noticed some changes in this edition, from our normal paper. For a start there is no colour in the banner, and also the type is of an inferior standard. This was forced on us because of time and finance.

We felt that we ought to bring publication forward in time for the general election, to enable us to present our opinions and ideas at a time when a lot more people than usual, are discussing and thinking about politics.

Therefore lack of time and funds forced us to cut certain corners. Our next edition should be back to normal

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This is the reality of the limitations of parliamentary democracy. Time and time again when Labour have attempted to live up to their election promises they have found themselves thwarted by the power of big business.

It is impossible for it to end up otherwise because they do not attempt to remove the capitalist system. They try to fight the power of capitalists whilst at the same time defending their system. A bit like going into a boxing ring with one hand tied behind your back.

Even those in the Labour party that can be considered to be earnest about their socialist ideals often have a very hazy idea of just how this is to be achieved. It's always "sometime in the future when we get a real left wing government.

If there is no hope through Labour then, what hope is there. Are we doomed to spend forever bouncing from ineffective Labour governments.

Fortunately there is another alternative. It is real socialism revolutionary socialism.

When we say revolutionary, we do not mean romantic pictures of Cossack hats or Havana cigars or secret meetings in dark halls. What we are talking about is a total and complete change from a capitalist society to a socialist one. About not trying to patch up or mess about with capitalism, but to wipe it completely away and build a new better system based on co-operation and assistance instead of greed and competition.

## S.D.P

The S.D.P. is new to the British electoral scene and they would have us believe that therefore they represent something new in British politics. This view has had some impact on people, especially people who have seen Tory and Labour Governments in action and have given up on both of them. This sentiment is often expressed in words such as "we have had Labour and Tory Governments and look what a mess they have made; lets give the S.D.P. a chance".

This opinion may have had some validity if it was true, but it is not. How can people who have been leading members of the Labour Party - Jenkins was Chancellor and Home Secretary, Owen Foreign Secretary, Williams Minister for Education and Consumer Affairs, Rodgers Transport Minister - pretend they had nothing to do with the decisions the Labour Government had taken in the past. No, what they want to do is build a party which can repeat the mistakes they made and disguise all this by pretending that it's something new.

# THE IRISH TEST

In no other area is the failure of the Labour Party as a means for social change seen as clearly as in the case of Ireland. Since the Northern Ireland statelet was formed in 1922 every Labour Government elected has presided over the most blatant discrimination and oppression of a section of the community in what they claim as part of Britain.

For 50 years Catholics in Northern Ireland suffered the worst housing, worst unemployment and in many cases didn't even have the right to vote. And in all that time the Labour Party have shown themselves to be at best impotent and at worst reactionary.

### IMPOTENT

The impotent side is best shown by the example of the Protestant Ulster Workers Council strike in 1974. This occurred when the Labour government attempted to bring to Northern Ireland some of the democratic rights that other 'British citizens' enjoy. The strike was a protest against this and the Labour government intended to rigorously oppose it and instructed the army to break the strike.

The army officers however refused to do this and the government had to back down. There is even a story told of

Harold Wilson having to tear up and rewrite a speech at the last minute because it would have been politically unsound to have made a strong attack on the strike when he knew he couldn't rely on the army to obey the governments instructions.

Whatever the truth of that there is no doubt that Catholics in Northern Ireland were left in no doubt about the inability of a Labour government to secure for them the most basic rights.

### REACTIONARY

The reactionary side of Labour has been shown by Home Secretaries such as Merlyn Rees and Roy Mason. It was Rees who, in 1976, took away the political status for Republican prisoners that had been granted by a Tory government in 1972. It was this action which led directly to the blanket protest and ultimately the hunger strikes and the death of ten young men.

The people of Ireland would see very little difference between a Labour and Tory government. In this country the political situation is not quite so developed and many people would say that there is a great difference. It is revolutionary socialists who look ahead and say that in given situations they act in much the same way and we look to Ireland to prove this.

In the face of the political realities of Ireland, Labour has been no more capable of bringing justice to the Nationalist people than King Canute was of stopping the waves. Even the principled actions of people like Ken Livingstone and Steve Bundred cannot wipe away Labour's failures. It is only the political and military actions of the Republican movement in the last 13 years that have brought Ireland to the attention of people like them.

For 50 years the Catholics were on their knees, oppressed and humiliated, and not a sound was heard from the Labour Party. It was only when they started to fight back themselves in 1969 that Labour was forced to abolish Stormont (reactionary Northern Irish parliament) which was seen as a great victory at the time and attempt some reforms.

### STRUGGLE

Today they are still oppressed but no longer on their knees. Their struggle has won them worldwide support and respect and they may well achieve British withdrawal in our lifetime. If they do it will be for one reason and one reason only. They stopped waiting for change from on high and went out and fought for it.



OLD WINE  
NEW BOTTLE

The worst aspects of the Labour Party are now evident in the S.D.P. Their M.P.s and Local Councillors are only out to further their own careers and when they found out they wouldn't be able to keep doing it in the Labour Party, they left. In Islington over twenty Councillors left the Labour Party for the S.D.P. but the electorate turned these old corrupt time servers out at the first opportunity.

The S.D.P. are nothing new and to believe otherwise is just allowing them to pull the wool over your eyes. They are time servers who are in it for themselves and cannot represent the wishes of ordinary people.

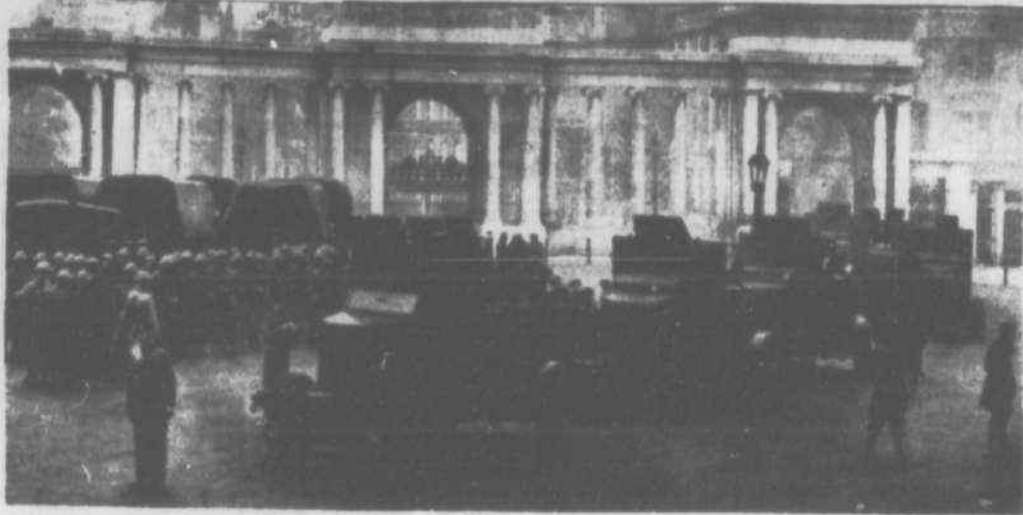
A vote for the S.D.P. is a vote for the Tories, the S.D.P. cannot win the election so therefore Labour is the only present alternative. They need every vote so a vote for the S.D.P. is a wasted vote which will keep the Tories in.



LABOUR GOVERNMENT TORY GOVERNMENT THESE GUNS ARE MADE TO KILL



# ALL CHANGE



TROOPS USED TO BREAK GENERAL STRIKE 1926  
WHEN WORKERS USED MASS ACTION

One of the criticisms often made of those who call for revolutionary change in society is that they are just dreamers. Things have always been the way they are, we are told, and they always will be. As for socialism, it's a nice idea but it will never work.

In fact things haven't always been as they are now. Modern history as we know it today did not begin until after the industrial revolution some 200 years ago.

Until that time the majority of people lived in villages either working the land for food, or working as spinners or weavers in their own home, often bartering instead of using cash.

With the coming of the industrial revolution, new inventions such as the spinning loom and the steam engine caused the old one person machines to become obsolete. Factories sprung up and the cities of today began to grow. What were known as Enclosure Acts forced many people off their land and they had to seek their living as wage earners in the new cities. The capitalist system and working class life as we know it today began to take shape.

So things weren't always as they are today. But what about the future? Is socialism just a pipe-dream that will never work?

Well, if we look at the performance of capitalism in the last 200 years, the economic crises, collapse of governments, unemployment, depressions, wars and repression, we could be forgiven for concluding that capitalism hasn't exactly worked that well either. But what about socialism? What are we talking about when we talk of a socialist society?

It is of course impossible for a small group of people such as Red Action to say exactly what form a socialist society is going to take because when it happens there are going to be a few million others involved. We can however at this stage describe certain features that will have to exist before a society can truly be described as socialist.

## THE COMMON OWNERSHIP OF THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Under capitalism all of the means of producing the basic

necessities of life, the land which grows the food, the factories and machines that produce the goods we need, the materials to build homes and hospitals, are all owned by individuals or small groups of people.

These people do not use them with a view as to what is most beneficial to the community, but as to what will make them the best profit.

If it is more profitable to build office blocks that will remain empty than it is to build homes for the homeless, then office blocks will be built and people will remain homeless.

If it is more profitable for farmers to keep up prices by destroying meat, butter, or apples, than it is to sell them off cheaply then they will. And pensioners and low income families stay on bread and margarine.

If those that employ scientists find it more profitable for them to research into nuclear weapons than finding a cure for cancer, that will happen, and thousands of cancer victims will die each year.

On top of all this, if the individual owners find that they can't make enough profit they can, and often do, just close the whole works down, taking away from thousands the means to produce what they need to live.

In a socialist society it will be impossible for this to happen. The resources of society under common ownership will be applied to the needs of that society as a whole. Building workers will work on building decent houses for all. Factory workers will produce more and better goods. When there is a surplus of goods or food the prices will be cut or the goods even given away.

Because the factories and machines will always be in use and not subject to being closed down on one person's whim, the amount of goods will grow. Less will be needed and the amount of working hours needed to produce them will fall. The working week can be cut and workers will be able to take longer holidays. That is the reality of the common ownership of the means of production.

## DEMOCRATIC ELECTION OF ALL ADMINISTRATORS AND OFFICERS

In capitalist society many of the institutions and offices are run by people who have never been and never will be subject to any form of election. The most obvious case of this is the legal system. Judges make laws (or at least interpret them at their own discretion and have great influence on how the law is shaped) that all of us are expected to live by. Yet over 99% of people have no say whatsoever over who becomes a judge.

Two years ago a Labour GLC was democratically elected by the people of London. One of their election pledges was to cut bus and tube fares. When they did a single judge ruled that it was illegal, and overruled the democratic decision of the people of London.

In a socialist society all officials and administrators Judges, police chiefs, senior civil servants, politicians would be elected and subject to recall

## EQUALITY OF REWARD TO ALL MEMBERS OF SOCIETY

The whole basis of the capitalist system is that some people are worth more than others. A doctor is worth more than a dustman, a business man more than a doctor, and the head of British Steel even more - and they are all paid accordingly.

Socialists reject this. In a modern society all of us are totally dependent on each other for our various tasks. Without the dustmen the towns and cities would soon be full of dirt and disease. The dentist is entirely dependent on the skills of the toolmaker who makes his instruments yet receives far greater reward.

About the only ones who wouldn't be missed by anyone are the very rich and the Lords and Royalty.

In a socialist society all those that make an equal contribution will receive equal reward.

# WHAT'S LEFT?

There are many people in this country who would agree with most of the ideas of socialism. People who believe that everyone should have the right to a good health service, to secure and well paid employment, and adequate pensions.

Yet most of these people continue to look only as far as the Labour Party, or have just become cynical as to the possibility of any real change.

The revolutionary left have so far completely failed to convince any sort of number of working class people of the possibility of an alternative. In the Bermondsey bye election the Raving Looney Party got twice as many votes as the Revolutionary Communist. To say that the working class hold the left in low esteem is to vastly overestimate its standing.

## ABUSE

We cannot be too surprised by this. Just about every left group in this country have a woeful record of using and then abusing working class militants, casting them aside when they have fulfilled their duty or had the insolence to question the party line.

Large popular movements such as the Anti Nazi League, or the women's movement, are either dismissed as being too soft, or cynically combed for recruits that come up to the required standard and then dropped as quickly as they were patronised.

Only those that are totally ignorant of working class mentality could hope to win large numbers of them in this way.

How can you convince workers

to give up the small measure of security that the system appears to offer and take the revolutionary path, when the organisation seems to be run by neurotic intellectuals who appear to be totally incapable of relating to working class culture and approaching it on equal terms. How often have we seen the know it all middle class lefty straight out of college lay down the law for a couple of years before disappearing back to a cosy career and life-style.

## CLASS

That is why we in Red Action say that a working class organisation must be led and dominated by those from that class, if it is to be receptive to the mood of the class.

To win the trust and respect of the class, it is necessary to not merely have the correct political line, but to show courage commitment and consistency.

It is no good just preaching that fascists should not be allowed to march, or pickets cross the line. We have to show that we have the courage of our convictions, and when we can take what steps we can to stop them. That is the sort of action that will win the respect of the working class.

They are the most cynical audience of all, and to win their allegiance will be no easy task but it can be done if we prove that we are serious about our politics.

When they are convinced they will be the most steadfast, but at the moment there is a long way to go.



# VOTE LABOUR?

## YES

Anyone who has been politically active during a Labour Government's term of office will have many bitter memories of the back peddling and sell-outs that they are capable of. No one is likely to forget that it was a Labour Government that began the cuts in public spending on the orders of the International Monetary Fund or their attempts to make workers pay for the crisis of capitalism with incomes policies designed to keep wages below inflation. Nor will we forget their role in Ireland or the actions of former Labour "comrades" like Reg Prentice and Woodrow Wyatt.

Yet I still believe that in the ABSENCE of a revolutionary alternative, socialists should vote for Labour. I do not believe that a Labour Government for all its deficiencies can be compared with a Tory one especially a Thatcherite Tory one.

### CRUSADE

Thatcher and her co thinkers cannot be seen as just pragmatic politicians trying to oversee the ripping off of the working class with as little fuss as possible. She is an ideologue on a moral crusade, who is seeking to change the whole social structure of the country.

Witness her many recent comments about returning to the values of Victorian society. The same Victorian society where workers had to touch their caps to their "superiors", where sex before marriage and homosexuality were sinful crimes and where the senile old men that make up the clergy had the power to influence the laws people lived by. That is the sort of Britain that Thatcher wants to see. Far fetched?

Consider the recent proposal that the single parent allowance should be scrapped because it is an encouragement to promiscuous behaviour.

### FUTURE

Many of the Tory measures so far have been merely laying the groundwork for future plans. The Tebbit bill is a good example of this. It has been law for some time now, and has been defied on many occasions, but the law has not been used. The government have obviously been unsure of the amount of opposition they may arouse and have held back.

If they were elected again it would, be seen by them as a vindication of all their policies and put massive wind in the sails of the far right of the Tory Party. They would undoubtedly demand that the Government begin to use legislation like the Tebbit Bill.

The Labour Party is committed to the repeal of the Tebbit

bill. It is also committed to the repeal of the prevention of terrorism act, unilateral disarmament and a whole lot of other things. Even if they were to renege on half of these, it would still be worth voting for them for the other half.

Even though Labour have presided over woefully inadequate pensions and benefits and the shameful rundown of the Health Service. It can not be compared with the Tories plans for its total disbandment, or the spiteful malicious way they brought in a tax on dole money deliberately hitting those that can least afford it.

### PRESSURE

Thatcher is totally unmoved by pressure from any sort of progressive social movement. A Labour government is at least sensitive to pressure and can sometimes be pushed into action. It was a Labour government that legalised homosexuality and saved thousands from being arrested and maybe imprisoned, and it was Labour MP's that eventually stopped the Corrie Bill (anti abortion) becoming law. If that had become law, large numbers of women would have been forced to return to back street abortionists with the resulting fatalities.

If you do not vote against the Tories then you make it easier for a party that has a large number of members who can quite fairly be described as closet fascists.

I am a socialist and I do not believe that a Labour government will implement socialism in this country, but I am not prepared to stand aside and see the rabid bastards in the Tory party who personally hate me and all I stand for just strut back into power. If people don't vote against them how can you blame them for thinking that people agree with what they're doing.

### ALTERNATIVE

Of course it would be better if we had a real revolutionary alternative to both Labour and Tory but it does not exist right now and it is no good sulking and saying that if you can't have the game your way then you're not playing. Quite simply, life is marginally better for working class people under a Labour government than under a Tory one.

Capitalism is a painful illness that the working class suffer and only the operation of a revolution can cure. Unfortunately we do not have the means of performing it right now, but if a shot of Labour government makes it a little easier to bear in the meantime, then I want a shot.

As a young and idealistic fifteen year old I joined the Labour Party and was put on a committee, we selected the prospective parliamentary candidate. I voted for a man who I knew had been on the big Vietnam Solidarity demonstrations against American imperialism. Everyone else voted for him because he was the 'local lad' and was considered the man most likely to win a marginal seat. After a year of this committee and that election, I decided that I wanted to use my energy to build socialism, not waste it as part of an electoral machine.

I could go on from here to list the innumerable 'crimes' of Labour governments and the Labour Party, locally, nationally and internationally, but as I haven't much space a few examples will do. Local councillors, particularly in Swansea and Tyneside, have been caught out in corruption scandals. Even the 'best' Labour councils have failed to put themselves on the line over govt. cut-backs and have recovered the money withheld from them by attacking council workers jobs and living standards and cutting services, so doing the Tories job for them. No Clay Cross this time! No Labour Councillors ready to go to prison for 'their socialism' as the Poplar councillors did in 1921 when they refused to withhold Poor Relief.

It is true that reforms have been implemented by Labour Govts. but reforms can be wrested from any govt. given the right climate and the need to give the workers something before the country is destabilised.

It is also true that Labour govts. may well have made more reforms but for the pressures of big business and threats of removing capital from the country by organisations such as the International Monetary Fund. So why haven't they used their resources to build international solidarity with other 'socialist' parties internationally to stop these threats? Why because like all the other 'socialist' parties they are patriots who believe in the national interest and not in the interests of the international working class.

## NO

It is argued that we need to return Labour Govts. so that it can be seen that they are not capable of implementing socialism, but quite honestly how many more times do they need to fail? I believe that the fight for socialism starts here and now, not in some better future when the conditions are right. I furthermore believe that the only disarmament policy that another Labour govt. will pursue is that of the further disarmament of the working class - further disillusioning any vision of a more egalitarian society amongst those people who work and vote for Labour.

A General Election in Britain, if it has any value at all, must be used not as an opportunity to encourage people to vote Labour as a lesser evil, but to broaden out the political arguments about, say, mass unemployment. To illustrate that this is not a British problem but that capitalism worldwide cannot give people food in their bellies or a job, let alone any opportunity to improve their existence. If a Labour govt. is elected there will be a 6 month honeymoon period when they will reflate the economy, then they will impose a restriction on wages by doing a deal with their class traitor allies on the TUC general council. We only have to look across the Channel to the French Socialist govt. and its austerity measures to see where the Labour Party will take us.

And when this fails as it inevitably will, in order to maintain power the Labour govt will introduce the necessary repression to bring the working class into line. Their own Police Bill will be a necessity.

The problem that we face as revolutionary socialists is not which government is going to kick us in the teeth after 9th June, but that people have no faith in their collective power to change their lives and the world that they live in. This is the task that Red Action should address itself to. This is not a defeatist attitude, this is realism. We are forced to begin to build a revolutionary tradition in the working class.

