

Heath and Thatcher in Opposition

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CONTENTS

1	The Nature of Conservatism	1
2	Decline and Fall I	11
3	Getting Used to Being Out of Office	25
4	Reasons (or Excuses?) for Failure	59
5	The Road to Selsdon	71
6	Decline and Fall II	97
7	The New Conservatism	117
8	Keith Joseph's 'Third Crusade'	123
9	Internal Warfare	149
10	The Inflation Nettle	175
11	The Industrial Relations Nettle	209
12	Thatcher – Ideologue or Pragmatist?	233

13 Conclusion – Heath and Thatcher in Opposition	275
Bibliography	297
Index	309

ABBREVIATIONS

ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
ACP	Advisory Committee on Policy
APEX	Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff
ASED	Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASTMS	Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs
BBC	British Broadcasting Company
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CO	Conservative Central Office
CCA	Churchill College Archive
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	Conservative Party Archive
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
CPC	Conservative Political Centre
CPRS	Central Policy Review Staff
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
CRD	Conservative Research Department
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security
EEC	European Economic Community
ESSC	Economic and Social Strategy Committee
EU	European Union
GMWU	General and Municipal Workers' Union
GNP	Gross National Product
HOSK	Hoskyns
IEA	Institute of Economic Affairs
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KJ	Keith Joseph

LCC	Leader's Consultative Committee (Shadow Cabinet)
LSC	Leader's Steering Committee
MP	Member of Parliament
NAFF	National Association for Freedom
NEDC	National Economic Development Council
NIESR	National Institute of Economic and Social Research
NIRC	National Industrial Relations Court
NOP	National Opinion Poll
NUA	National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PPB	Party Political Broadcast
PSBR	Public Sector Borrowing Requirement
PUB	Published and Printed Material
SOGAT	Society of Graphical and Allied Trades
TASS	Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TRA	The Right Approach
TUC	Trades Union Congress

INTRODUCTION

This book is intended to be read at a number of levels by both serious students of politics and the interested general reader. Most obviously, it is an account of how on two occasions, in the most unpropitious circumstances after not one but two election defeats (in 1964 and 1966, and on two occasions in 1974), the Conservative Party approached the task of developing policies which enabled it to win elections – somewhat unexpectedly in both cases – in 1970 and 1979. The responses to the challenges which the Party faced during both those periods of Opposition are illustrated to the greatest possible extent by what those most intimately involved actually said and wrote at the time. Though their later considered views, set down in memoirs and autobiographies and the like are also taken into account, as are the views of biographers, academics and journalists, it is the contemporarily expressed views of the principal players which, to my mind, best capture the essence of what faced the Party during the two periods in question.

More broadly, it also provides striking insights into the extent to which the Conservative Party is prepared to juggle principles, policies and politics in order to satisfy its conviction that it is the ‘natural party of government’. Being in power is much more preferable to Conservatives than indulging in heated and prolonged debates on matters of principle in Opposition. In summer 2016 as I write, the speed with which the Conservative Party has regrouped after the EU referendum throws the agonies currently being endured by the Labour Party in an attempt to settle the same question – the relative importance of principles or power – into sharp relief.

At a further level, the book, as its title reveals, is a study of the manner in which the two leaders of the Party during the Opposition years which preceded and followed the 1970–4 Conservative Government, controlled and directed the work necessary to revive the Party's electoral appeal and presented themselves to the public as worthy candidates for the highest office. In this respect, the *double entendre* in the title of the book is deliberately designed to give a foretaste of the fact that the differences between the approaches taken by Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher in preparing their Party to present a serious challenge to the Wilson and Callaghan governments respectively could not have been more marked. How much this was dictated by circumstances or reflected different understandings of the nature of Conservatism or strategic and tactical appreciations of the best way to regain power are explored in detail.

At an even broader level, the book can be read as presenting a picture of what being in opposition is like for any party which finds itself so circumstanced. The party will have suffered an election defeat, the size of which will be significant in relation to what has to follow in terms of repositioning. The reasons for defeat have to be identified and lessons learned from them. The search for agreement on what those lessons are often leads to factional struggles. Election defeats also frequently bring about changes in party leadership requiring internal regroupings around the new leader and the development of new styles of approaching policy-making. None of these difficulties and the problems flowing from them can be avoided by parties which find themselves in opposition. And all this has to be contended with alongside the maintenance of a parliamentary challenge to the government on a day-to-day basis.

In short, I hope readers will find in the book what they may be looking for as well as insights into questions which may not have previously arisen in their minds. Should either of these things happen, I shall feel that my efforts in compiling the book have been worthwhile.