

# End approaches for Thatcher's dark age

by Mark Burdman

"The dark age of Thatcherism is coming to a close." So stated the British Labour Party's Sylvia Heal, on winning Britain's critical Mid-Staffordshire mid-term local election on March 22. Mrs. Heal beat her Conservative opponent by a 16% margin, in an electoral district that has been traditionally a Conservative stronghold. The swing vote from the last election in Mid-Staffordshire was a stunning 21 percentage points, the largest swing vote for Labour in an off-year election in over 50 years.

BBC's political correspondent stated hours after the results were released that Mrs. Thatcher's Tories had suffered a "sensational defeat in a safe seat." He and other British political experts assert that if the Tories do badly in upcoming local elections in May, there will be great pressure on Mrs. Thatcher to resign. In three minor local council elections earlier in March, the swing to Labour averaged *over 30%*.

But Mrs. Heal's success should be seen not as a victory for the Socialist International-affiliated Labour Party, but as an anti-Thatcher protest vote. It has taken Mrs. Thatcher to revive the Socialist International in Britain, at a time when SI-affiliated parties elsewhere, notably in Sweden, East Germany, and Holland, have suffered big setbacks in recent weeks. (See Lyndon LaRouche's statement that the defeat of the socialists and communists in East Germany is a big setback for Thatcher, p. 36).

Voters said they had voted for Labour in protest against Thatcher's imposition of a "poll tax" in England and Wales, which goes into effect on April 1. This measure taxes residents of Britain on a "flat-rate" basis, that is, without any consideration for ability to pay, as previous tax policies had done. Many Conservatives are angered by the unfairness of the tax and because it is exorbitantly high.

The poll tax was first imposed on the Scots last year, where it is so unpopular that Thatcher's own cabinet minister for Scotland, Malcolm Rifkind, threatened to resign from her government only hours before the Mid-Staffordshire voting unless the poll tax rate for Scots were reduced.

In Lichfield/Mid-Staffordshire, Mrs. Thatcher was deserted by a base of voters, such as working-class home owners, who had reacted against the Labour Party's socialism in the late 1970s.

Nationally, she is losing another constituency: the yup-

pies of the City of London and environs. The 1980s boom in Britain in financial services, real estate, and information technologies had led to Thatcher's being characterized in certain quarters as the "Nanny of the yuppies." But Britain's regime of high interest rates, high mortgage rates, and the closing down of many financial houses in the City of London may lead to their joining the growing ranks of the homeless now roaming the streets of London.

## Freeing the globe from Thatcherism

The implications of Thatcher's defeat may be greater internationally than internally. The "dark age of Thatcherism" has cast a shadow over large parts of the globe during the 1980s. The faster her government collapses, the faster populations the world over will recover from so-called Thatcherite economic policy, a particularly virulent form of insanity of the 1980s.

In the United States, "Reaganomics," a variety of Thatcherite deregulation and "free-market" policies, has wrecked American infrastructure and scientific and technological capabilities. Freeing Americans from Thatcherism will have a salutary effect reminiscent in certain ways of the mood of the 18th-century American Revolutionary War against the "free-trade" policies of Adam Smith and the British East India Company.

In Eastern Europe, Thatcherite "shock therapy" is creating the Polish nightmare where the government has accepted the advice of the Adam Smith Institute, one of the key Thatcherite advisory institutions in London which also devised Britain's poll tax swindle. In Czechoslovakia, there has been an ongoing debate about whether to implement Thatcherite reforms. With his uncanny sense of drama, Czech President Vaclav Havel was in Britain on the day of the Mid-Staffordshire elections.

The most interesting case of all may be the Soviet Union. Mrs. Thatcher has had a perverse crush on Mikhail Gorbachov since she first met him in late 1984, always claiming he was a "man she could do business with." Throughout the week of March 19, as the March 22 date of the Mid-Staffordshire by-election approached, the British press was saturated with reports from Moscow that the Soviets were moving rapidly toward implementing a "Polish-modeled" shock reform of their economy. The rejection of Mrs. Thatcher's policies by the British electorate should have a sobering effect on those who envisage driving the U.S.S.R. into chaos by bringing the Polish Adam Smith nightmare across the Soviet borders.

Mrs. Thatcher, with her obsessive harping about slowing down German reunification, has become the torment of the German people, who can only joyously celebrate her downslide. German and other continental European minds should now have greater freedom to implement what the French call "dirigist" approaches to infrastructure development in Eastern Europe.