

## REVIEWS/BOEKBESPREKINGS

1. J. DENIS DERBYSHIRE AND IAN DERBYSHIRE: POLITICS IN BRITAIN. FROM CALLAGHAN TO THATCHER.
2. IAN DERBYSHIRE: POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES FROM CARTER TO BUSH.
3. IAN DERBYSHIRE: POLITICS IN FRANCE FROM GISCARD TO MITTERAND.

ALL THREE PUBLISHED IN 1990 AS PART OF THE CHAMBERS POLITICAL SPOTLIGHTS BY W E R CHAMBERS, 43-45 ANNANDALE STREET, EDINBURGH EH 74AZ. PRICE NOT GIVEN.

These books form part of the popular and particularly useful series Chambers Political Spotlights. It is an updated version of earlier issues and takes political developments in the three countries to the summer of 1990. The focus is on political development notably party policies and strategies, election results and its consequences and the interaction between party policy and public opinion.

In the case of Great Britain the main issues of political development are clearly identified with the emphasis on the two major areas: constitutional development and efforts to make democracy more efficient; and the dominant influence of market theories on economic thinking and policy. The emergence of the New Right supply-side economics in the Thatcherite Conservative Party is explained and theory and practice narrated. The American influence via Reaganomics is obvious. On the other hand the efforts of Liberals, Social Democrats and Labourites to mould a left of centre economic policy is explained. Based on West German ideas about the social market it is presented as a counter against far left ideological socialism. Environmental concerns and its increasing importance, especially since Margaret Thatcher's conversion in 1988, receives due attention. The rise of National Parties in Scotland and Wales are narrated and brought up to date.

The struggle within the Alliance between David Owen's Social Democrats and the new merger party the Social Liberal and Democratic Party and the electoral misfortunes of the Labour Party and its resurrection after 1988 means that this book is a very updated one.

Ian Derbyshire, who is a Research Fellow at Cambridge University, introduces his study of

contemporary French politics with a brief but very useful analysis of the intricacies of the French political system, with emphasis on the peculiar nature of the multi-party system and the wheeling and dealing of coalition government. He explains the ambitions and ideals of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who, at the age of 48, became the third President of the Fifth French Republic in May 1974. His technocratic approach to liberal reform did not help him to avoid the internecine party and coalition horse trading of French politics. He left office in May 1981 as an embittered figure, having experienced seven years of intracoalition strife and buffeting by a severe economic crisis. His successor, Francois Mitterand, became the first Socialist President of the Fifth Republic. He was determined to end the Gaullist influence in French political leadership. He was greatly assisted in his effort when he secured a majority in the French National Assembly elections in June 1981. This enabled him to introduce a programme intended to transform radically and decisively the French polity and economy. He was not allowed to achieve this. By March 1983 he was forced to introduce an austerity U-turn programme and three years later his party lost its Assembly majority. This thrust France into a novel and experimental period of cohabitation from which, in 1988, the President emerged triumphant, securing election for a second term.

Challenges from the Left and the Right led to a rise in political temperatures by 1990 with industrial unrest and rising criticism of immigration policies topping the agenda. The rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the National Front was demonstrated by their success in two by-elections in December 1989.

Mitterand himself became subject to powerful media criticism for what they described as his

"increasingly distant and monarchical ruling style." During the bicentenary celebrations of the French Revolution in 1989 he was referred to as "King Mitterand". His lavish social and cultural entertainment activities and his increased number of foreign diplomatic tours stimulated criticism. It became a joke that it was now an event when he "visited" Paris. Mitterand was becoming more like Giscard and de Gaulle.

In the final section of the book the author discusses the prospects of France becoming a two-party state like Britain.

The third volume in the series examines the changing political scene in the United States during the Carter, Reagan and Bush eras and the different policy programmes pursued. The coming to power of the unknown Southerner Jimmy Carter with his promise of a new era of frankness and honesty following the disgrace of the Watergate years, was viewed with little enthusiasm. Four years later he was to depart in ignominy, having failed to exert his influence over Congress and having been held to ransom by Iranian students. Reagan came to power on a wave of patriotism and conservatism with a promise to restore America's strength and to effect a radical social and economic transformation. The following two years saw the country plunged into a deep recession and a renewed Cold War. The US economy, however, rapidly rebounded and, with the country's military might restored,

President Reagan was re-elected for a second term with a landslide majority. Unfortunately for him, his successes in the economic and diplomatic field was sorely tested by the Irangate scandal. This did not prevent George Bush, Reagan's deputy, from successfully securing election as the country's new President in what was the Republican Party's fifth success out of the last six contests.

Against this background Ian Derbyshire examines the resurgence of Congressional power and the growth of political individualism; the operation of presidential government; the contest for national leadership; the revival in Republicanism and conservatism; the changing character of the Supreme Court; the rise of ethnic politics; the diminishing influence of trade unions; the implication of growth in the 'sunbelt' West and South; and assesses changes in America's foreign policy and the success of the 'Reaganite' counter-revolution. In addition, it includes analyses of the 1986-7 Irangate scandal, the 1988 presidential contest, and assesses the opening years of the Bush presidency.

All three volumes represent essential reading for the secondary teacher and deserves a place on his desk as a resourceful reference book for pupils. There are also volumes on the Soviet Union, the Chinese People's Republic and West Germany in the series. These were, however, not available for review.