

a policy long neglected under the previous Socialist governments.

As the bomb attack the evening of March 20 at the Champs Elysée emphasizes, the Lebanese hostage crisis is the most acute and most immediate of these problems. There are presently seven French citizens who are hostages in or around Beirut. Three are hostages of the Iranian-controlled Hezbollah organisation, while four recently kidnapped journalists of French Television are said to be in the hands of an organization close to Syrian intelligence. An eighth hostage, Michel Seurat, was assassinated by the Hezbollah a number of months ago. His assassins released the pictures of his corpse only recently as part of a calculated pre-election psychological maneuver.

For months prior to the elections, the previous Socialist government negotiated frantically with both the Iranian and Syrian governments without any result. Systematic concessions were made to the Iranians, in particular, including not very discreet sales of weapons, in a futile attempt to achieve the release of the hostages.

Knowledgeable observers believe that this crisis will worsen before it gets better. The new prime minister is considered to have long-standing ties to Iraq, one of France's traditional trading partners in the Middle East. These same

sources note that both the Iranian and Syrian governments, albeit for different reasons, want to force France to shift its entire Middle East and Gulf policy. The Syrians in addition are said to want to force the French once and for all out of Lebanon, where French influence is still strong, particularly in the Christian community. Ultimately the hostage crisis will boil down to a fundamental foreign policy choice which the new government, in coordination with President Mitterrand, will have to make.

### A novel arrangement

Constitutionally, the new French government arrangement is entirely novel. Never in the history of the Fifth Republic (founded by President Charles de Gaulle in 1958, creating a strong presidential regime supported by clear majorities in the national assembly) has there been a President presiding over a government of entirely different political party affiliations. Long thought to be unworkable or leading to ungovernability, it appears that the new government is the result of an agreement struck between the new legislative majority and the President; it therefore may have greater chances of lasting than originally expected.

The success of this arrangement will demand—has already demanded—t

## European Labor Party exposed the Trilaterals

The European Labor Party, known in France as the Parti Ouvrier Européen (POE), ran candidates in 27 French "départements" (roughly, the equivalent of states) in the legislative elections, on a platform calling for a shift in economic policy to "Colbertist" fostering of high-technology industrial growth, and a defense policy of French cooperation in the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative. The party is headed by POE secretary Jacques Cheminade, who reached millions of voters in several incisive national television appearances during the election campaign. It is inspired by the ideas of American economist and political leader Lyndon LaRouche.

The POE became known for spearheading opposition to Trilateral Commission policy schemes designed to destroy France's sovereignty, beginning with last year's "Greenpeace" affair. At that time, POE spokesmen exposed the U.S. Trilateralist lawyer Lloyd Cutler, attorney for the environmentalist-terrorist Greenpeace organization, for attempting to destroy French intelligence capabilities to the benefit of the Soviet Union. The POE then

took the lead in exposing the dangerous ambitions of Swiss bankers' agent and Trilateralist Raymond Barre, who was played in the press as a major force in the opposition. The heavy defeat of Barre-linked candidates was one of the biggest upsets of the March 16 vote.

On March 20, the daily *Le Monde*—France's "newspaper of record," which had ignored the POE's entire electoral campaign—wrote that the campaigns of the European Labor Party, "in particular those against the Club of Rome, the Trilateral, and in favor of Third World development, make a sound that, in effect, evokes the Gaullism of the left rather than ultra-conservatism." The article was *Le Monde's* response to a Soviet-orchestrated slander campaign, attempting to link the European Labor Party to the Palme assassination (see pages 22-25).

*Le Monde* otherwise notes that the POE claims to be in the tradition of (Socialist) Jaurès, former President Charles de Gaulle, and Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the 17th-century founder of the governmental policies conducive to industrial capitalism. The article labels the POE's attitude on the Soviet Union "obsessional," but adds that this has led to a strong support for President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative.

Despite meager resources, a blackout by the national media, and a wildly variegated slander campaign, the POE candidates were officially credited with 43,000 votes.