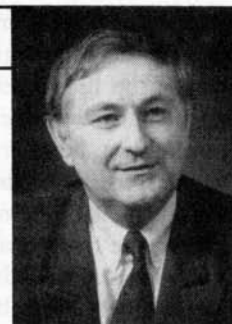

Interview: Jacques Cheminade



London advisers run France more and more

Jacques Cheminade, based in Paris, is the leader of the political movement Nouvelle Solidarité—New Solidarity—which presented candidates in the recent regional elections in a number of places in France (box, p. 43). An author and journalist, Cheminade has published a book called The True History of France and he is also the author of one of the most sought-after newsletters on the French scene, called Le Commentaire. His observations about French and Mediterranean politics were edited from an interview conducted on Feb. 22 on the U.S. cable television show “The LaRouche Connection,” where he appeared together with German journalist Anno Hellenbroich. The program’s moderator was Webster Tarpley.

Recipe for social blowup

France is undergoing the worst crisis since World War II, and probably a worse crisis than the 1929-33 crisis. We have in France a potential labor force of about 30 million persons. Ten million are working in the public sector, with more or less safe jobs. This leaves a 20 million person potential labor force outside of the public sector. Of this 20 million, 10 million are employed with more or less safe jobs. Ten million have either extremely unsafe jobs or no jobs at all: The official figure of unemployment is more than 3 million; 2-3 million are in temporary jobs with no chance whatsoever of getting a permanent job later; and 4 million are in totally insecure and part-time jobs.

That means 10 million of the active population excluded from the labor force, who are losing the capacity to work for the nation or for a firm. This creates inside the country, a potential for a social explosion which is very, very big.

When confronted with that, the government says that it’s difficult to foster domestic consumption, and it’s difficult to rely on investment, so they rely on exports. They say they will be helped by the so-called American recovery, which does not exist. And they’re talking about the German market, which is collapsing.

The other way that they try to “save” the economy is to get money into the stock market, into the derivatives, into the speculative sector. There’s a credit crunch in the banks; the banks are in too bad a situation to give money to the firms, so they play on the derivatives markets. What’s left? The

stock market. And the firms go looking for bonds and stocks on the stock market, which is a catastrophe, because the stock market is going to collapse one of these days. Because the government keeps putting money into the stock market, creating a bubble which is getting bigger and bigger.

The incredible shrinking government

Who comes to Paris to make money on this bubble? Paine Webber, Goldman Sachs, Shearson Lehman, and Lazard Frères. This in turn produces, inside the government, a group of people who control the government totally—the privatizations, for example. The public sector is being sold off. The first is BNP [Banque Nationale de Paris], one of the biggest French banks. Then, it’s UAP, an insurance company; Elf, the oil jewel of the French public sector; Rhône-Poulenc, the chemical company.

So, for the privatization of all these firms, they need a counsel—an expert. Who is it going to be: For BNP, the first victim of privatization, it’s Lazard Frères. Why? Because the son of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur is a partner in Lazard Frères, Jérôme Balladur. Then you have the former adviser to Balladur in the privatizations of 1986-89, who is a partner in Lazard Frères. Another former adviser of Balladur is a partner in Lazard Frères. The chain of power is Lazard Frères, the Treasury, and then the government.

If you want to understand how France works today, it’s a group of people who represent the senior advisers from the public sector and the government officials, who turn to bankers; and the bankers turn to insurers, and insurers turn to speculators. All these people form a group that controls the domain in which government can do things. The mistake of the government is to accept a more and more contracted realm for its activity; the government is more and more cornered into doing less and less.

The odd couple

The French government is like the old American TV situation comedy, “The Odd Couple.” You have François Mitterrand and Edouard Balladur. President Mitterrand is a Socialist, a social monetarist, who has nothing to do with the traditional understanding of the word socialist. He’s the President, the head of state. And then you have Edouard

Balladur, the prime minister, who is a Gaullist. He has been in office since the beginning of last year, when his party came out on top in the general elections to parliament. He has nothing to do with the Gaullists; so, it's pure hypocrisy in the government, because one pretends to be a Socialist, and he's not; the other pretends to be a Gaullist, and he's not. Between 1958 and 1968, during the ten years when de Gaulle was in power, the traditional financial control of the French state was broken. But little by little, since 1968, those financial forces which controlled the French nation in the 19th and much of the 20th century are coming back into control of the nation.

France is a nation where you had social security and retirement guaranteed. Now, all this has been put into question. They are telling people that pensions, retirement funds, are going to be given away to insurance companies, because the government has no money. That's the first tragedy: Old people will have no more social security and no more pensions. They're going to be thrown away by French society.

Another tragedy is young people, from suburbia, from around the cities. These young people are sometimes French or coming from foreign countries, who were born in France. Then there are foreign families of guest workers, and these people have no jobs; they have no schooling; they are outsiders, leftovers. What do they do? They survive by street-peddling or dealing drugs. The money from drugs is the main source of income at this point in part of the French neighborhoods around Paris.

People who, until five years ago, had the best diplomas in the French educational system, which is at a relatively high level, still cannot get jobs.

Mediterranean about to blow up

After the social bombshell in the East of Europe, we face a second bombshell, which is the Mediterranean.

Africa is being destroyed, by devaluations of the currencies, where they want to create sweatshops in Africa, whence you can export cheaply. France has dropped African countries, and let the so-called African franc, the CFA franc, be devalued by 50% in one shot, without any preparation. So, in these countries, they can no longer import any goods; but their exports are suddenly 50% cheaper, so you can create sweatshops there.

How can you create a productive sector in a viable way in countries that are destroyed by AIDS? For example, in the Ivory Coast, 20% of the population *at least*, and certain of my friends say 40%, are HIV sero-positive.

Algeria is being destroyed by the IMF, and by a civil war. There's chaos and war, because there's no chance to develop the country. Why? In the past, the Algerian government tried to develop the oil sector, and then an industry. Because it was a socialist government, with the problems of a socialist government affected by Soviet ideology, they destroyed farming production, but they achieved, in a certain

way, the development of the oil industry and heavy industry in general. But all of a sudden, the oil prices collapsed and the foreign markets, or the markets that they could have had in Africa, collapsed! So they could no longer produce, because there were no more markets.

Now, the creditors want to impose IMF conditionalities that would bring the country to its knees. This country is opposite France on the Mediterranean coast. In Morocco, it's been a less-accelerated process, but it's taking place; the same in Tunisia. And, 5 million people of North African origin are in France.

In Spain, under the Franco dictatorship, there were certain social measures taken in favor of labor. Now, a socialist government is throwing out the social measures that this *dictatorship* had written in favor of labor. The unemployed are receiving less. The idea is that if you give less to the unemployed, they would want to be employed—when there are no jobs! They're cutting medical allowances, and they're also cutting the protection of labor. For example, before, you

French Nouvelle Solidarité movement at take-off point

The overall results of France's March 20 cantonal elections were surprising in many respects. They are also a turning point for the new Nouvelle Solidarité movement, of which several candidates went over the critical level of 2% of the vote.

The national results were a surprise for all. A significant protest vote against the RPR/UDF government and majority was generally expected, following the social unrest of the last months. Everyone still has in mind the Air France workers' revolt against the restructuring and privatization of their company, the hundreds of thousands demonstrating against Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's school reforms, the desperate fishermen rampaging through the fish markets in Paris in protest against the globalization of the world markets, and the more recent student protests against the "youth" minimum wage. It was generally expected that the repeated backdown of Balladur in all these conflicts had begun to undermine his popularity significantly.

Despite all these circumstances, the vote, which saw 44.7% go to the right wing (all parties included), has consolidated the present government for the short term. The Socialist Party, which was well on its way to self-destruction with 19% of the vote in last year's legislative elections, benefitted slightly from the social unrest and reached nearly 29% this time.

could not be fired from a job from one day to the next, but now you can.

Britain's plans for Italy

After the war, Italy had a certain type of government, which was based on a compromise of various forces around the state sector that was developing the country. The state sector was: chemicals, oil, electricity, steel, and the construction sector. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Anglo-American banks and the Anglo-American interests asked, "How are we going to get our hands on that?" and there was a meeting on the *Britannia*, the royal yacht of Queen Elizabeth II, with bankers from Italy, bankers from the City of London, and certain American bankers who planned how to loot the public sector of Italy. So, they launched corruption scandals around the Italian political class.

This corruption was due to a law that these bankers had imposed on the Italian elites in the 1940s. This was the law during the Anglo-American occupation, that limited the pub-

lic financing of the political parties. Now they are saying that these people are guilty of having done what they told them to do, practically. With that excuse they want to rob the whole public sector of Italy, control it, and cut it into pieces.

We are looking at the presumed collapse of the Christian Democratic Party, which has been the largest one, always in the government, generally the prime minister; the collapse of the Socialist Party; the collapse of smaller parties, like Social Democrats, Liberals, Republicans, and so forth.

In their place, two things are likely to emerge. In the first stage, probably, the former communists will gain. The former communists are 100% for liberal monetarist measures and 100% for austerity. So, these bankers from the City of London—this oligarchy from London and from the United States, and other oligarchies—are saying, "Let's give them a few years, or a few months"—probably a few months—"for the control of dismantling of Italian industry." Then, on the other side, is another coalition of liberal forces with a neo-fascist so-called movement, the pro-Mussolini people,

At the same time, a significant protest vote keeps reinforcing France's extremes. Benefitting from the huge unemployment, the Communist Party recovered nearly four points since the fall of the Berlin Wall, climbing to 11.4% of the vote. On the extreme right wing of the political spectrum, Jean-Marie Le Pen scored 9.7%, a slight drop in his party's national support. However, this drop should not be overestimated, because National Front candidates continue to get over 15% of the vote and, in some areas, up to 30%.

The people who think in France, as opposed to those who continue to vote according to "habit" for parties which caused the present economic catastrophe and brought about the general weakening of the nation, seized the opportunity to vote for the candidates of the Nouvelle Solidarité movement of Jacques Cheminade. Out of 28 candidates who ran nationwide, five got 2% of the vote or more, with one of them crossing over the 5% barrier! Eleven others received between 1 and 1.9%. These results are very encouraging. Even the pessimists in the business of evaluating election results estimate that 2% is the minimum for a new party to really take off, anything under that being generally passed off as the vote of friends and family.

An indication of the political quality of those who voted for Nouvelle Solidarité is that, despite the fact that these were very local, district elections, the Nouvelle Solidarité campaigns were not run on local issues at all. How can one talk about local issues when there is war in the Balkans and one of the worst economic crises hitting the world economy, asked most of the candidates in their

declarations which were printed in the press and distributed to the homes of nearly 500,000 voters.

Real issues addressed

The statements called for launching a double ultimatum, one to solve the Bosnian crisis; the other to put an end to unemployment. On all issues, the Nouvelle Solidarité candidates were the only ones to name the names. The Juppé-Kinkel plan for the ethnic partition of Bosnia was denounced by most as shameful. On the economic crisis, the candidates attacked the corruption in Paris, where Balladur favors the interests of Wall Street houses such as Lazard Frères, where his son and several of his advisers just happen to work. Before Balladur entered office, the socialists had done their best as well to pave the way for financial speculation.

Some of the best results of Nouvelle Solidarité went to the younger candidates, indicating a strong desire of voters to replace the old, worn-out, discredited politicians. It was 22-year-old Laurent Arena, a history and geography sophomore, who got 5.2% in the city of St. Etienne. I am just a "simple student," he declared in his statement of candidacy, but I want to protest against a system which favors financial speculation and the abuse of cheap labor in the Third World through globalization.

Generally, the best election results came in areas badly hit by the economic crisis and where no alternatives were perceived. Agnes Farkas scored 2.7% in St. Avold, a mining area in Lorraine, and François Calentier 2.74% in an area outside Paris which had a large farming sector.

—Christine Bierre

including the MSI (Italian Social Movement) which ran Mussolini's granddaughter Alessandra Mussolini for office in Naples: The predominant part of them shares a neo-liberal policy with the liberal right wing (the other is the liberal left wing).

And then there are the Leagues. The Lombard League, now the Northern League, has chauvinist, racist overtones; it basically says Italy should be divided into the North, the so-called Padania; the middle, Etruria; and the South, the Mezzogiorno—three separate countries. In reality, they don't want to divide it into three parts; they want to divide it into two parts: The bigger part of the pie for the British bankers, and the smaller part for them.

And then, there is a newcomer, Silvio Berlusconi, with Forza Italia ("Go, Italy!"). Berlusconi basically owns all of the privately owned television. It's a dirty, sex-drugs-pornographic operation.

Resistance and the LaRouche movement

The friends of Lyndon LaRouche in Italy have been briefing the leadership of various political parties, including those parties that we mentioned: Honest people have joined these parties, who are dupes, and are reacting, because they see their country being destroyed. *L'Umanità*—the official newspaper of the Italian Social Democrats—has run articles in several issues from *EIR* on the monetary destabilization.

This attempted takeover by the British oligarchy of Italy was launched through a scandal called *Mani pulite* or "Clean Hands," against Italian politicians. This is coming into France also, and they're launching similar scandals. It can bring about a kind of coup d'état.

As with the Whitewater operation against President Clinton, they did not go after the Italian politicians or the French politicians because they were doing such good things; they were not doing much. But they went after them, because *potentially* there could be some reactions of independence against the derivative markets bubble, and reactions of independence, because they don't want to see their base destroyed: Their base is their country, their firms, the population—and this is what this oligarchy wants destroyed.

In France, our party is called Nouvelle Solidarité, and our newspaper is called *Nouvelle Solidarité* or *New Solidarity*. We are running in regional elections but not, probably, in the European elections, because of the cost involved. There is a very unjust, unfair, political system in France, where there is a financial barrier that prevents you from running in the European Parliament elections if you are a small party.

In 1995, there will be presidential elections in France, as in Italy and Spain, all of which center around one man. I am running for President in 1995 in France. Mitterrand will not run again. As of today, Edouard Balladur is said by everybody to be the next French President. But, as Lyndon LaRouche said about George Bush just before and after the Gulf war, Balladur's popularity is about a mile wide and one



A scene in a Paris Metro station in 1993. Of France's potential labor force of 30 million, 10 million are either unemployed, underemployed, or working at insecure, part-time jobs. This has created the potential for a social explosion.

centimeter thick.

Circles of the old French administration don't want to see the country ripped apart. These proto-patriotic groups come from the planning sector of the economy during the de Gaulle period. These are strategic thinkers in the main state-controlled, or partially state-controlled industries: oil, chemicals, aerospace, and the nuclear sector, in particular. In all these sectors, they know that if this Anglo-American, City of London policy continues, they are going to be dismantled. They see our activity in Russia, in the United States, in Europe, all over the world, as the friends of Lyndon LaRouche—in Australia for example—as having a unique quality.

Various expressions of a revolt are coming from inside the French establishment. Maurice Allais, for example, the French economist, came out violently attacking the GATT projects, and saying that, from a precise estimation which is not even based on a true conception of physical economy, but an incompetent monetarist estimation, the GATT agreement is going to be a disaster for production.

None of these elites has yet endorsed LaRouche's Productive Triangle project for linking Paris, Berlin, and Vienna and turning this area into the locomotive for world economic recovery. However, alternative plans are being put forward: the Delors plan for Europe, or the Malinveau plan, from the former head of the planning commission in France, who calls for investment planning in Europe of a very sizable amount—more or less, \$300-400 billion. What they are not yet willing to do, is to face the British.