

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