

EIR Feature

Jacques Cheminade campaigns for French nationhood

by Christine Bierre

After months of brutal factional warfare leading up to the first round of the French presidential elections on April 23, the Paris nomenklatura has apparently decided that Edouard Balladur, the current prime minister, will be defeated, and that Jacques Chirac, the head of France's nominally Gaullist party, the RPR, will be the next President. This, at least, is the line that the Paris media are trying to ram through.

In times of crisis, however, whatever the nomenklatura might decide is not of much importance; those very institutions can be swept away in a matter of days, just as we saw when the Berlin Wall came down, and, with it, 50 years of communism in eastern Europe. Indeed, even though most of the polls are giving Chirac a lead in the race, with Socialist Lionel Jospin coming in second, the same polls are reporting that more than 40% of the French population has not yet decided for whom to vote. There may still be surprises in store.

What are the issues at stake for France in the coming period? Most immediately, there is the problem of solving the severe unemployment problem. Fully unemployed persons are now in the range of 3.3 million, that is, more than 12% of the workforce. To this already disastrous figure one should add 2 million more who have make-work jobs and about 5 million who have part-time work with "flexible schedules." Counting both total and partial unemployment, nearly one out of every four French workers is unemployed.

Another major challenge for the incoming President will be to solve the crisis into which years of financial speculation have plunged the country. The case of the Crédit Lyonnais, the largest of the public sector banks, whose losses are in the range of 80 billion francs (approximately \$16 billion), is indicative of this process. The 200-300 billion francs (\$50 billion) debt accumulated by the real estate sector is another example of this same problem.

The third problem area which will define the new Presidency is the question of the future of Europe, and, especially, of who will be France's most important ally in the future. Will the Franco-German alliance, which has been the basis for



Jacques Cheminade on the campaign trail, April 1995. "Surprise candidate" Cheminade has stunned the media and the political nomenklatura by securing more than the 500 signatures of elected officials required to qualify for the Presidential race. A friend of Lyndon LaRouche and the only candidate who represents "the Party of France," his campaign has created a total uproar.

the prosperity and stability of Europe in the postwar period, be maintained? Or, will France orient toward a new Entente Cordiale with Great Britain, aimed mainly at weakening the position of Germany?

Behind these issues, however, the deeper question is this: Will the "Party of France," as Gen. Charles de Gaulle and others in French history have referred to it many times, will reemerge to ensure the sovereignty of the French nation, or will France continue its present decline and become a second-rate nation? The expression "*parti de la France*" refers to a tradition going as far back as Charlemagne, a conception redefined and improved by France's Renaissance King Louis XI (see box), which later tends to reappear in French history with figures such as Henri IV and his great minister Sully, with Jean-Baptiste Colbert, or with the group of scientists grouped around Lazare Carnot during the French Revolution and leading up to de Gaulle during this century.

The 'commonwealth' idea

Central to this tradition is the idea that the state has the responsibility for ensuring the "commonweal" of the entire population: It must protect the citizenry from looting by rapacious and unscrupulous financiers, protect the most humble of its citizens, and ensure equal opportunities to all. In this tradition, the state is responsible for creating an appropriate climate for productive investment and scientific research which benefits the nation as a whole, through its control of credit and by investing in large infrastructure projects. It is

from such policies, as well as from the commitment to high-quality public instruction for everybody in the country, that France derives its strength and its ability to be an independent nation.

Increasingly, since the death of Charles de Gaulle in 1970, France has been losing those essential values and turning more and more to the oligarchical financial practices which have been rampant in the Anglo-American part of the world for the past century. Under those influences, France has not only deregulated its financial system, breaking with the previous longstanding policy of a credit system that penalized speculation and favored productive investment, but it was the state-sector banks and companies that have often led the way into the craziest of the financial practices of the last 15 years. It is these orientations which have led to massive unemployment, to accumulation of a state debt nearing the 60% mark, as well as a public deficit in the order of 5% of Gross National Product.

Relative to these issues, where do the different candidates stand? Which way will France go during the next seven-year Presidency?

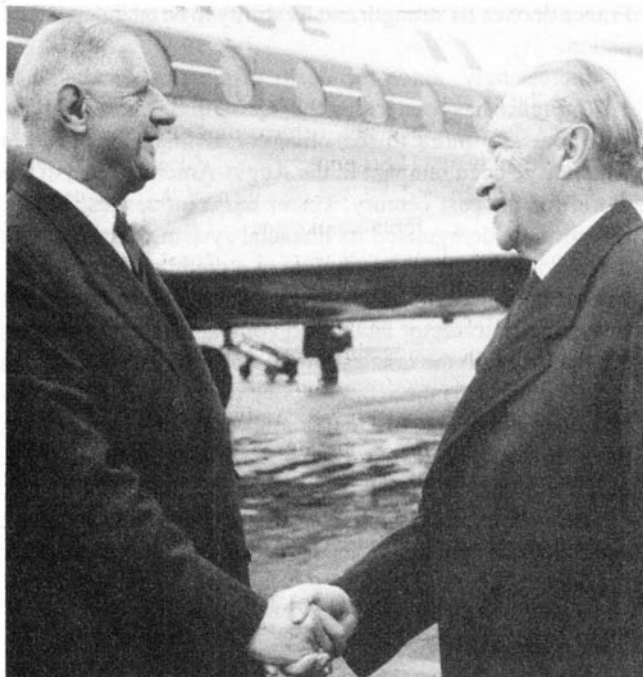
The candidates

While the factional fight which preceded the election was particularly brutal, as indicated by the series of scandals which broke out in the recent months, it is difficult to say to what extent this struggle involved the issues that are key to the survival of the nation.

Of all the candidates, there is no question that Edouard Balladur is the purest incarnation of the financial oligarchical view. Balladur's entourage is almost exclusively dominated by high-level monetarists and bankers, ranging from the heads of the Treasury and of the Bank of France (the central bank), to the leaders of top insurance and investment houses such as the UAP and Lazard Frères, as well as of heads of exclusive financial empires such as the Rothschild family and the Groupe Rivaud.

Among all the candidates, Balladur is the only one to have given his support to the idea that the cause of France's economic crisis is the "high wages" of the lower-income workers! Balladur appointed arch-monetarist Alain Minc to head a commission which produced a report along these lines, entitled "Challenges of the Year 2000."

In foreign policy, it is Balladur who broke with several time-honored Gaullist principles. He is to be blamed for the rapprochement between France and Great Britain, a renewed Entente Cordiale forged to the detriment of the Franco-German alliance (for a historical analysis of this policy, see *EIR*, March 24, "London Sets the Stage for a New Triple Entente"). Concerning France's allies in the Third World, the two years of Balladur in power will be recalled as those during which France dumped its longtime allies in Africa by devaluing the African franc (the CFA) and turning over the French-speaking African countries to the International Monetary Fund, measures which have plunged those coun-



Gen. Charles de Gaulle (left) with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, in Bonn in 1961 for the signing of the treaty reconciling the French and German peoples. Franco-German friendship must be a cornerstone of a new foreign policy for France, says Cheminade.

tries into despair.

Is there any serious opposition to these policies from the two other main candidates, Jacques Chirac, the president of the RPR, and Lionel Jospin, the candidate for the Socialist Party? Is there any sign of a return to power of the policies of the Party of France?

The potential for this is always present in France. But today, it can only be catalyzed by the ideas of the "surprise candidate," Jacques Cheminade, even though he is the candidate of a small party.

In their written and oral statements, both Chirac and Jospin have attacked the flight forward into speculation, with Jospin going as far as proposing a 0.1% tax on speculative products. These attacks are also occurring in the context of a more general outcry against speculation, picked up by the majority of the left-wing candidates and many media commentators.

Concerning social issues, Chirac has rejected Balladur's attempt to attack the poorest layers of the population, and, under the influence of the head of the National Assembly, Philip Seguin, has attempted to revive the social doctrine of Gaullism. It was he who first called for an increase in the real wages of workers by transferring some of the burden of social costs paid by employees, to the state. Almost every candidate then jumped on the bandwagon created by Chirac, competing with opportunistic fervor to see who could propose the highest wage increases, and leading to a situation in which all the candidates, including the racist Jean Marie Le Pen, are calling for an increase of the minimum wage. Oblivious to the financial crisis which has intensified so dramatically worldwide since the devaluation of the Mexican peso in December 1994, all the candidates, except Cheminade, are insisting that such marvelous wage increases will be made possible by the current "upswing" of the economy!

Most of these promises in the social domain—including promises to create millions of make-work jobs, to launch Marshall Plans to reconstruct the poor suburbs, and to build new homes for the poor—are to be discounted as pure demagoguery, typical of election campaigns. All the candidates know that the French people are fed up with the austerity that has been imposed over the last 14 years, fed up with unemployment, fed up with the overpricing of housing caused by real estate speculation, fed up with seeing the state bailing out the banks and the real estate companies, while not one sou is going into real production. Strikes have broken out throughout the country over the last weeks, in public transport, insurance, and industry, indicating the danger of a social explosion. Most candidates are therefore pandering to this ferment.

Could there be a rejection in foreign policy of the tendency toward an Entente Cordiale and a return to the Franco-German alliance? The three mainstream candidates all travelled to Germany to meet and negotiate with Chancellor Helmut Kohl the basis of a renewed Franco-German alliance for the next seven years. Chirac and Jospin's platforms are the

Louis XI's founding of the French nation

In an article published in *EIR* on Feb. 17, Lyndon LaRouche underlined the historical role of France's King Louis XI, who ruled from 1461 to 1483. "The principle," LaRouche wrote, "that every person is made in the image of God, was not introduced efficiently into the practice of statecraft until the mid-fifteenth-century Council of Florence and the subsequent establishment of the first modern nation-state, the commonwealth of France's King Louis XI. The notion of commonwealth introduced by Louis XI to France, is the beginning of the existence of the modern form of nation-state."

France in the fifteenth century had 14 feudal duchies and 94 major cities, which Louis XI unified on the basis of the common good. This "commonwealth" idea was conveyed in the slogan, "One law, one weight, one currency." The king also established one army.

In an article soon to be published in *New Federalist* newspaper, Pierre Beaudry documents Louis's crafting of the nation-state. One vital aspect was a tax policy for population growth, which Beaudry describes as "the first time in history that a policy of demographic growth had

been consciously implemented for the establishment of the nation-state."

"As a general policy," Beaudry writes, "Louis capitalized on the initiative of entrepreneurs and inventors, whom he protected, in agriculture as well as industry and commerce. He adopted protectionist and anti-dumping measures to protect grain growers or linen producers; exempted traders from provincial tariffs, while imposing tariffs on foreign merchandise; encouraged skilled labor from other countries to come into Dauphine and settle there with their families, guaranteeing them tax exemptions proportional to their productivity."

"The most significant political change that the king forced through was to bankrupt the feudal landed aristocracy with the creation and defense of industries throughout the 94 cities of France, and by opening trade with England, and treaty agreements with Genoa, Florence, Naples, Sicily, and Calabria. He guaranteed the expansion of industries by subsidizing the cities, including the medieval cities; such subsidies came from a tax (*la taille*) which was inversely proportional to the productivity of the earner. Accordingly, the feudal princes were taxed at a higher rate than the burghers, and the burghers higher than the city-dwellers. . . . Through the judicious use of taxes, both levying and exempting as the case may be, Louis was able to direct economic growth and development throughout the kingdom."

strongest in favor of maintaining the Franco-German alliance. Chirac surprised many by not mentioning once in his platform the need for reinforced cooperation with Great Britain. Quite the contrary, he called for a renewal of the Franco-American alliance, which, in the context of the current breakdown of the British-American "special relationship," would seem to align Chirac against the British. Jospin, whose support committee is headed by Jacques Delors and by Delors's daughter Martine Aubry, can hardly be suspected of harboring anti-German sentiment.

These are only tendencies, however, and very fragile ones. The artisan of the "new social policies" of Chirac is known to be Philip Seguin, whose sympathies for Britain were expressed most clearly in the biography he authored recently about Britain's favorite French catamite, Napoleon III. The Seguin group within the Chirac camp is also cohabitating with that of Alain Madelin, the French president of the Mont Pelerin Society, whose policies echo the anti-state ravings of the Conservative Revolution crowd in the United States.

Cheminade's impact

In this context, only the candidacy of Jacques Cheminade can possibly catalyze a reemergence of the Party of France.

Even as the election campaign began, the influence of Cheminade's policies was visible in the Chirac and Jospin camps. It is Cheminade and his friends who have been campaigning in recent years for a 0.1% tax on financial derivatives, well before any of the official spokesmen of the Socialist Party even knew what derivatives were. In the last two months of the campaign, Chirac called for the creation of a Middle East Common Market to cement the new Mideast peace accords, and called for increasing aid to Africa and the rest of the Third World; he even called for a Marshall Plan for the Paris suburbs. Such policies have long been advocated by Cheminade.

None of the other candidates, however, know how to realize those policies. None of them are aware of the fact that the international monetary system has to be put through bankruptcy proceedings, before it can move in the direction of policies of growth. None are willing to announce a crack-down on financial speculation, and moving toward a two-tier credit policy that would favor productive credit and penalize speculative capital.

An element which is central to evaluate the credibility of these presidential programs, is how they will deal with the Maastricht Treaty on European union. The three main parties are favorable to the treaty and to all its consequences: 1) the

maintenance of the autonomy statute for a central bank which is explicitly forbidden to extend credit for large-scale public projects; and 2) the return to a public deficit lower than 3.5% and of indebtedness of less than 60%, which would necessitate massive austerity budgets. All these criteria exclude the possibility of a Marshall Plan-type solution of great infrastructure projects in the east and in the south, to relaunch the productive economy.

A reemergence of the Party of France demands today a

President with the courage to defy the institutions of the financial markets, and to call, along with Germany, for the application of bankruptcy proceedings to the world financial system. It requires a rejection of the autonomy of the Bank of France, and abolishing the conditions which forbid that bank and other central banks in Europe from extending credit for large infrastructural projects, such as high-speed trains, nuclear power grids, and canals, in eastern Europe and toward the countries of the South.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche endorses Cheminade

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, the chairman of the Civil Rights Movement Solidarity in Germany, issued this statement on April 12:

In view of the strategic significance for Germany of the upcoming French presidential elections, which are occurring amid the continued disintegration of the world financial system, with wars raging around the globe, there is only one appropriate term to characterize the silence of the German media over “surprise candidate” Jacques Cheminade, and that term is: stupid arrogance. Because whether the media people like it or not, over the coming weeks, Jacques Cheminade’s participation in these elections—a status which he earned with the signatures of over 500 sitting mayors—has shifted the stage of the historic battle over a way out of the worldwide crisis, into France.

If we in Germany have learned anything from the history of the last two centuries, then it should be this: that without Franco-German friendship, based on positive principles, it is impossible to secure peace in Europe. That was the conclusion which de Gaulle and Adenauer, to name only two, drew when they signed the Franco-German Treaty in 1963.

Among the French presidential candidates, Jacques Cheminade is the only one who has made friendship between our two nations into a central feature of his program, whereas all the other candidates have acquiesced to various degrees in the model of the unsavory policies of an “Entente Cordiale” or a “Triple Entente”—as was recently demonstrated clearly enough in their attitudes toward the Serbian war of aggression against Croatia and Bosnia. Thanks to such attitudes, now once again we have come very close to the same dynamic which characterized the situation leading up to World War I.

Opposing this danger of a new Triple Entente, Che-



Helga Zepp-LaRouche with Jacques Cheminade.

minade represents the alliance among France, Germany, and America for the economic development of the Eurasian continent—a political vision which, thanks to President Clinton’s renunciation of the “special relationship” between Great Britain and the United States, especially with his speech in Berlin [in 1994], has become a great opportunity for a political turnaround.

It is precisely because that opportunity must become reality—because, for us in Germany and in all of Eurasia, peace and economic survival hinges upon it—that I give my wholehearted support to Jacques Cheminade’s presidential campaign. I do this also, because his policy of Franco-German cooperation in the economic development of the so-called Third World, in the spirit of Gottfried Leibniz, is the only policy that is morally acceptable.

Long live Franco-German friendship!